ENVER HOXHA

WITH STALIN

Memoirs

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Tirana, December 1979

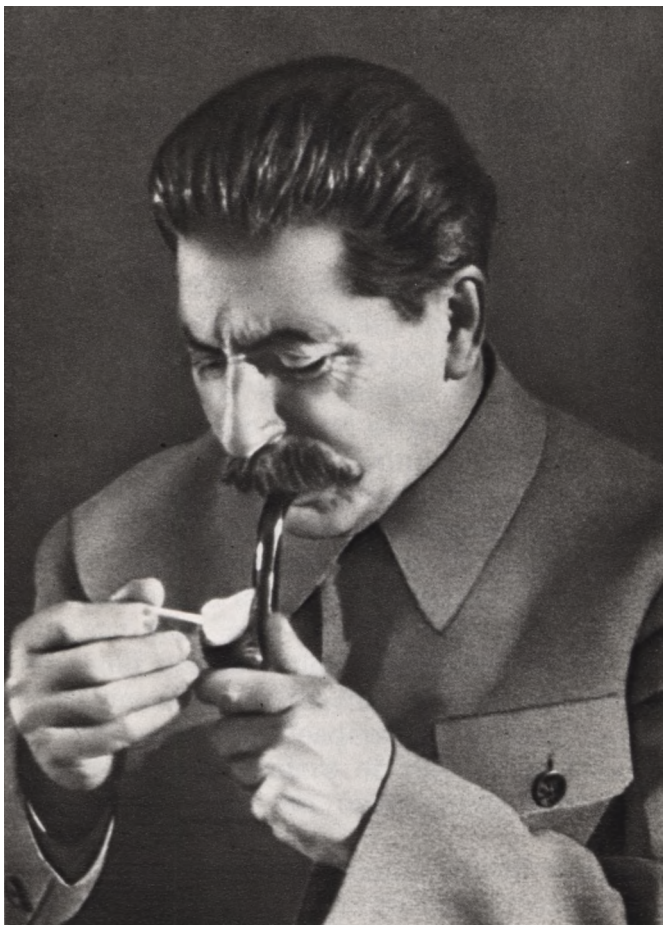
THE INSTITUTE OF MARXIST-LENINIST STUDIES
AT THE CC OF THE PLA

THE «8 NËNTORI» PUBLISHING HOUSE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENARY

OF THE BIRTH OF THE GREAT

MARXIST-LENINIST JOSEPH STALIN



JOSEPH STALIN

ON THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF JOSEPH STALIN

December 21 this year marks the centenary of the birth of Joseph Stalin, the much-beloved and outstanding leader of the proletariat of Russia and the world, the loyal friend of the Albanian people, and the dear friend of the oppressed peoples of the whole world fighting for freedom, independence, democracy and socialism.

Stalin's whole life was characterized by an unceasing fierce struggle against Russian capitalism, against world capitalism, against imperialism and against the anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist currents and trends which had placed themselves in the service of world reaction and capital. Beside Lenin and under his leadership, he was one of the inspirers and leaders of the Great October Socialist Revolution, an unflinching militant of the Bolshevik Party.

After the death of Lenin, for 30 years on end. Stalin led the struggle for the triumph and defence of socialism in the Soviet Union. That is why there is great love and respect for Stalin and

loyalty to him and his work in the hearts of the proletariat and the peoples of the world. That is also why the capitalist bourgeoisie and world reaction display never-ending hostility towards this loyal disciple and outstanding, resolute co-fighter of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Stalin earned his place among the great classics of Marxism-Leninism with his stern and principled struggle for the defence, consistent implementation and further development of the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin. With his keen mind and special ability, he was able to find his bearings even in the most difficult times, when the bourgeoisie and reaction were doing everything in their power to hinder the triumph of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

The difficulties facing the Russian proletariat in the realization of its aspirations were immense, because capitalism reigned in Russia and the world. But capitalism had already produced its own grave-digger — the proletariat, the most revolutionary class which was to lead the revolution. This class was to fulfil its historic mission successfully, in merciless struggle against its enemies, and through this struggle, win its rights and freedoms, and take political power into its own hands. On this course, the proletariat was to wrest political and economic power from its oppressors and exploiters — the capitalist bourgeoisie, and build the new world.

Marx and Engels created the proletarian science of the revolution and scientific socialism. They founded the International Workingmen's Association, known as the First International. The fundamental principles of this first international association of workers were formulated in its Constitutional Manifesto, which defined the road of the proletariat for the liquidation of private ownership of the means of production, for the creation of the party of the proletariat to seize state power on the revolutionary road, as well as for the struggle the proletariat had to wage against capitalism and opportunism, which presented itself in different «theoretical» forms in different countries.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the brilliant continuer of the work of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, basing himself on their major works and defending them with rare mastery, waged the struggle against the trends of revisionists, opportunists, and other renegades. The traitors discarded the great banner of the First International and openly spurned the slogan of the Communist Manifesto: «Workers of all countries, unite!». Instead of opposing the imperialist war, these renegades from Marxism voted credits for it.

Lenin wrote major works in defence and for the development of Marxism. In particular, he enriched the ideas of Marx and Engels on the construction of socialist and communist society.

Always bearing in mind the materialist development of history, as well as the conditions of the country and the epoch in which he was living, Lenin fought for the creation and consolidation of the Bolshevik Party. Vladimir Ilyich, together with the other bolsheviks, through an intensive revolutionary struggle within Russia and abroad, in the conditions of the decay of czarism and its army, prepared and launched the Great Proletarian Socialist Revolution.

Lenin's plan of genius for the triumph of the revolution was realized. After the Great Revolution, which shook the old world and opened up a new epoch in the history of mankind — the epoch of the liquidation of oppression and exploitation, was crowned with success, Lenin continued the struggle for the construction of the first socialist state. Lenin's devoted collaborator, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, fought and worked together with him.

It is understandable that the bourgeoisie could not fail to rise against the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin and their correct, resolute and unwavering actions in favour of the working class and the peoples, and it did so, without hesitation, savagely and consistently, never ceasing to aim its various weapons against them.

This great, organized hostility of capitalism and the reactionary world bourgeoisie was confronted with the great, organized and invincible

strength of the Russian proletariat in unity with the world proletariat. This confrontation was an expression of a fierce class struggle within and outside Russia, which was apparent during that whole period in the clashes with the interventionist forces and the remnants of czarism and Russian reaction. These enemies had to be fought mercilessly.

The Bolshevik Party had to be tempered, the building of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the principal issue of the revolution, had to be completed and the foundations of the socialist economy laid in the course of this class struggle. Therefore, fundamental reforms had to be carried out in all sectors of life, but on a new course, in a new spirit, with a new purpose; Marx's theory on philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism had to be applied in a creative manner and under the concrete conditions of czarist Russia.

All these aims were to be realized under the leadership of the proletariat, as the most advanced and most revolutionary class, relying on its alliance with the poor and middle peasantry. After the creation of the new state power, a great and heroic struggle had to be waged to improve the economic and cultural life of the peoples liberated from the yoke of czarism and foreign capital of other European countries. In this titanic struggle, Stalin stood firm beside Lenin; he was a front-line fighter.

The more the new Soviet state became consolidated politically, the more industry developed in all its branches, the more the collective agriculture and the new socialist culture developed in the Soviet Union, the fiercer the resistance of the external enemies and local reaction became. The enemies intensified this struggle especially after the death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Before the body of Lenin, Stalin pledged that he would loyally follow his teachings, would carry out his behests to keep the lofty title of the communist pure, to safeguard and strengthen the unity of the Bolshevik Party, to preserve and ceaselessly steel the dictatorship of the proletariat, to constantly strengthen the alliance of the working class with the peasantry, to remain loyal to the end to the principles of proletarian internationalism, to defend the first socialist state from the ambitions of the local bourgeois and landowner enemies and the external imperialist enemies, who wanted to destroy it, and to carry the construction of socialism through to the end in one sixth of the earth.

Joseph Stalin kept his word. At the head of the Bolshevik Party he knew how to lead the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union and to make the great Homeland of the Russian proletariat and all the peoples of the Soviet Union a colossal base for the world revolution. He showed himself to be a worthy continuer of the work

of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and gave brilliant proof that he was a great, clear-minded and resolute Marxist-Leninist.

The enemies within the Soviet Union — the Trotskyites, Bukharinites, Zinovyevites and others, were closely linked with foreign capitalists, because they had become their tools. Some of them remained within the ranks of the Bolshevik Party in order to take the citadel from within, to disrupt the correct Marxist-Leninist line of this party with Stalin at the head, while some others operated outside the party but within the state, and in disguise or openly plotted to sabotage the construction of socialism. In these circumstances, Stalin persistently implemented one of Lenin's main instructions about unhesitatingly purging the party of all opportunist elements, of any one who capitulates to the pressure of the bourgeoisie and imperialism and any view alien to Marxism-Leninism. The struggle Stalin waged at the head of the Bolshevik Party against the Trotskyites and Bukharinites was a direct continuation of the struggle waged by Lenin, a profoundly principled, salutary struggle, without which there would have been neither construction of socialism, nor any possibility of defending it.

Joseph Stalin knew that the victories could be achieved and defended through efforts, sacrifices, through sweat and struggle. He never displayed ill-founded optimism over the victories

that were achieved and was never pessimistic about the difficulties which emerged. On the contrary, Stalin was an exceptionally mature personality, prudent in his thoughts, decisions and actions. As the great man he was, Stalin was able to win the hearts of the party and people, to mobilize their energies, to temper the militants in battles, and uplift them politically and ideologically in order to carry out a great work, without precedent in history.

The Stalin five-year plans for the development of the economy and culture transformed the world's first socialist country into a big socialist power. Guided by the teaching of Lenin about giving priority to heavy industry in the socialist industrialization, the Bolshevik Party headed by Stalin equipped the country with a very powerful industry for the production of means of production, with a giant machine-building industry, capable of ensuring the rapid development of the entire people's economy and all the necessary means, as well as an impregnable defence. As Stalin said, the socialist heavy industry was set up «relying on the internal forces, without enslaving credits and loans from abroad». Stalin had made it clear that in setting up its heavy industry, the Soviet state could not follow the road which the capitalist countries pursue, by taking loans from other countries or plundering other countries.

After the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union a modern socialist agriculture was built up with the support of a powerful base of agricultural machinery produced by the socialist heavy industry, and thus the problem of grain and other principal agricultural and livestock products was solved. It was Stalin who elaborated Lenin's cooperativist plan more thoroughly, who led the implementation of this plan in fierce struggle with the enemies of socialism, with the kulaks, the Bukharinite traitors, with the innumerable difficulties and obstacles which stemmed not only from enemy activity, but also from the lack of experience and from the feeling of private property which had deep roots in the consciousness of the peasants.

The build-up of economic and cultural strength helped the consolidation of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union. At the head of the Bolshevik Party, Stalin organized and ran the Soviet state in a masterly way, further perfected its functioning and, always on the Marxist-Leninist course, developed the structure and superstructure of society on the basis of the internal political situation and economic development, while never losing sight of the external situations, that is, the rapacious aims and the sinister intrigues concocted by the bourgeois-capitalist states in order to impede the construction of the new state of the proletarians.

World capitalism regarded the Soviet Union as its dangerous enemy, therefore from outside it endeavoured to isolate it, while it encouraged and organized the plots of renegades, spies, traitors and rightists from within. The dictatorship of the proletariat struck down these dangerous enemies without mercy. All the traitors were put on public trial. At that time, their guilt was proved most convincingly with incontrovertible evidence. The bourgeois propaganda raised a big fuss about the trials conducted in the Soviet Union on the basis of the revolutionary law against the Trotskyites, Bukharinites, the Radeks, Zinovyevs, Kamenyevs, Pyatakovs and Tukhachevskys. It stepped up and raised to a system its campaign of slander and denigration against the just struggle of the Soviet state, the Bolshevik Party and Stalin that defended the life of their peoples, defended the new socialist system built with the blood and sweat of the workers and peasants, defended the Great October Revolution and the purity of Marxism-Leninism.

What slander did the external enemies not invent, especially against Joseph Stalin, the continuer of the work of Marx and Lenin, the talented leader of the Soviet Union, whom they accused of being a «bloody tyrant», and «murderer». All these slanders were remarkable for their cynicism. No, Stalin was no tyrant, no despot. He was a man of principle, he was just, modest

and very kindly and considerate towards people, the cadres, and his colleagues. That is why his Party, the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the entire world proletariat loved him so much. This is how millions of communists and outstanding personalities, revolutionaries and progressive people throughout the world knew Stalin. In his book entitled «Stalin», Henri Barbusse says among other things: «He established and maintains links with the workers, peasants and intellectuals of the USSR, as well as with the revolutionaries of the world, who love their homeland — that is, with many more than 200 million people». He added, «This clear and enlightened person is an unpretentious man... He laughs like a child... From many aspects Stalin is very much like the extraordinary V. Ilyich: the same mastery of theory, the same practical sense, the same determination... More than in anyone else, in the person of Stalin one finds the thought and word of Lenin. He is the Lenin of today.»

Consistent Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideas run like a red thread through all Stalin's thoughts and Works, whether written or applied in practice. No mistake of principle can be found in the works of this outstanding Marxist-Leninist. His work was well weighed up in the interests of the proletariat and the working masses, in the interests of the revolution, socialism and com-

munism, in the interests of national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles. He was not eclectic in his theoretical and political opinions, nor was he vacillating in his practical actions. He who relied on the sincere friendship of Joseph Stalin was confident in his onward march towards a happy future for his people. He who deviated could not escape the keen vigilance and judgement of Joseph Stalin. This judgement had its roots in the great ideas of the Marxist-Leninist theory which had crystallized in his brilliant mind and pure soul. Throughout his whole lifetime he knew how to keep a firm hold on the helm and steer a correct course to socialism amongst the waves and storms created by enemies.

Stalin knew when and to what extent compromises should be made provided they did not violate the Marxist-Leninist ideology, but on the contrary, were to the benefit of the revolution, socialism, the Soviet Union and the friends of the Soviet Union.

The proletariat, the Marxist-Leninist parties, the genuine communists and all the progressive people in the world considered the salutary actions of the Bolshevik Party and Stalin in defence of the new socialist state and socio-economic order to be just, reasonable and necessary. The work of Stalin was approved by the world proletariat and the peoples, because they saw that he fought against the oppression and exploitation

which they felt on their own backs. The peoples saw that the slanders against Stalin came precisely from those monsters who organized mass tortures and killings in capitalist society, those who were the cause of starvation, poverty, unemployment and so much misery, hence they did not believe these slanders.

Millions of proletarians throughout the world rose against these enemies in big strikes and powerful demonstrations in the city streets, and attacked the factories and plants of the capitalists. The peoples rose in struggle against the colonizers to win their democratic freedoms and rights. These actions were, at the same time, an all-round international support for the Soviet Union and Stalin, which helped to strengthen the new state of the Soviets and enhance its great authority in the world.

All the communists throughout the world who were fighting against world capitalism were called «agents» of the Soviet Union and Stalin by the bourgeoisie and the renegades from Marxism-Leninism. But the communists were honest people, they were nobody's agents, but were simply loyal supporters of the doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. They supported the Soviet Union because in its policy they saw their great support for the triumph of communist ideas, they saw a clear example of how they should develop their struggle and increase their efforts to win

the battles one after the other, to defeat the enemies and rid themselves of the yoke of the power of capital and build the new, socialist social order.

While world capitalism was growing weaker as an outdated order in decay, socialism in the Soviet Union was triumphing as the new order of the future and becoming an ever more powerful support for the world revolution. In these circumstances capitalism was absolutely compelled to employ all its means to strike a mortal blow at the great socialist state of the proletarians, which was showing the world the way to escape from exploitation, therefore the capitalists prepared and launched World War II. They raised, supported, incited and armed the Hitlerites for the «war against Bolshevism», against the Soviet Union, and to realize their dream of «living space» in the East. The Soviet Union understood the danger which threatened it. Stalin was vigilant, he knew full well that the slanders concocted against him by the international capitalist bourgeoisie, alleging that he was not fighting the rising nazism and fascism, were slogans to be expected from this bourgeoisie and the Hitlerite Fifth Column, in order to deceive world opinion and realize their plans for an attack on the Soviet Union.

The 7th Congress of the Comintern, held in 1935, rightly described fascism as the greatest

enemy of the peoples in the concrete circumstances of that time. On the direct initiative of Stalin, this Congress launched the slogan of the peoples' anti-fascist united front, which should be created in every country with the aim of exposing the aggressive plans and predatory activity of the fascist states, so that the peoples would rise against these plans and this activity in order to avert a new imperialist war which was threatening the world.

Never for any moment did Stalin lose sight of the danger threatening the Soviet Union. At all time he fought resolutely and gave clear-cut instructions that the party must be tempered for the coming battles, that the Soviet peoples must be united in a steel-like Marxist-Leninist unity, that the Soviet economy must be consolidated on the socialist road, that the defences of the Soviet Union must be strengthened with material means and cadres, and have a revolutionary strategy with revolutionary tactics. It was Stalin who showed and proved through facts from life itself, that the imperialists are warmongers and that imperialism is the bearer of predatory wars, therefore, he instructed that people must be continuously vigilant and always prepared to cope with any action by the Hitlerite nazis, the Italian fascists, and the Japanese militarists, together with the other capitalist world powers. Stalin's word was prized above gold, it became a guide

for the proletarians and the peoples of the world.

Stalin proposed to the governments of the big capitalist powers of Western Europe that an alliance should be formed against the Hitlerite plague, but these governments rejected such a proposal, indeed they even violated the alliances they had previously signed with the Soviet Union, because they hoped the Hitlerites would eliminate the «seed of Bolshevism» and pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.

Faced with such an extremely serious and dangerous situation, and being unable to convince the government officials of the so-called western democracies to conclude a joint anti-fascist alliance, Stalin considered it appropriate to work so that war against the Soviet Union was postponed, in order to gain time to further strengthen its defences. To this end, he signed the non-aggression pact with Germany. This pact was to serve as a modus vivendi to stave off the danger temporarily, because Stalin saw the Hitlerite aggressiveness, and had made and was continuing to make preparations against it.

Many bourgeois and revisionist politicians and historians allege that the Hitlerite aggression found the Soviet Union unprepared and for this lay the blame on Stalin! But the facts refute this slander. Everyone knows that Hitlerite Germany, as an aggressive state, violating the non-aggression pact in a piratical and perfidious manner,

took advantage of strategic surprise and the numerical superiority of the huge force of about 200 divisions of its own and its allies, and threw them into a «blitzkrieg» by means of which, according to Hitler's plans, the Soviet Union was to be overrun and conquered within not more than two months!

But everyone knows what happened in reality. The «blitzkrieg», which had succeeded everywhere in Western Europe, failed in the East. Being very strong behind the lines, with the support of all the Soviet peoples, in its withdrawal the Red Army exhausted the enemy forces until it pinned them down, then it counter-attacked and smashed them with successive blows, until finally it forced Hitlerite Germany to surrender unconditionally. History has already recorded the decisive role of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Hitlerite Germany and the annihilation of fascism in general in World War II.

How could Hitler's plan of «blitzkrieg» against the Soviet Union have been defeated and how could that country have played such a major role in saving mankind from fascist bondage without all-sided prior preparation for defence, without the steel strength and vitality of the socialist system which withstood its greatest and most difficult test in World War II? How can these victories be separated from the exceptionally great role played by Stalin, both in preparing the

country to withstand the imperialist aggression, and in the rout of Hitlerite Germany and in the historic victory over fascism? Any diabolical attempt by the Khrushchevite revisionists to separate Stalin from the party and Soviet people in connection with the decisive role of the socialist state in this victory is smashed to smithereens in the face of the historic reality which no force can refute or diminish, let alone wipe out.

The war of the Soviet peoples, with Stalin at the head, led to the liberation of a series of countries and peoples from nazi bondage, brought about the establishment of people's democracy in several countries of Eastern Europe and gave a powerful impulse to the national liberation, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggles, so that the colonial system disintegrated and collapsed, and this created a new ratio of forces in the world in favour of socialism and the revolution.

Khrushchev was so shameless as to accuse Stalin of being a person «shut away» from the reality, who allegedly did not know the situation in the Soviet Union and the world, who allegedly did not know where the forces of the Red Army were deployed and commanded them using a school globe as his map!

Even such heads of world capitalism as Churchill, Roosevelt, Truman, Eden, Montgomery, Hopkins and others were obliged to recognize the incontestable merits of Stalin, although at the

same time, they made no secret of their hostility towards the Marxist-Leninist policy and ideology and Stalin personally. I have read their memoirs and seen that these heads of capitalism speak with respect about Stalin as a statesman and military strategist, describe him as a great man «endowed with a remarkable sense of strategy», «with an unrivalled sharpness of mind in the rapid comprehension of problems». Churchill said about Stalin, «...I respect this great and brilliant man..., very few people in the world could have understood the problems over which we had been at a loss for months on end, like this, in so few minutes. He had grasped everything in a second».

The Khrushchevites wanted to create the illusion that not Stalin, but they, had allegedly led the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union against nazism! But the whole world knows that during that time they were sheltering under the shadow of Stalin to whom they sang hypocritical hymns of praise, saying: «We owe all our victories and successes to the great Stalin», etc., etc., at a time when they were preparing to blow up these victories. The genuine hymns, which came from the heart, were sung by the glorious Soviet soldiers who went into the historic battles with the name of Stalin on their lips.

Although far from the Soviet Union, the Albanian communists and people felt the great role of Stalin very strongly and intimately, at the

gravest moments our country experienced during the Italian and German fascist occupation, when the fate of our Homeland, whether it would remain in bondage or emerge into freedom and light, was decided. During the most difficult days of the war, Stalin was always beside us. He boosted our hopes, illuminated our perspective, steeled our hearts and will, and increased our confidence in victory. Many a time, the last words of the Albanian communists, patriots, and partisans who gave their lives on the battlefield or facing the enemy's gallows, machine-gun or automatic rifle, were: «Long live the Communist Party!», «Long Live Stalin!». More than once it has occurred that in piercing the hearts of the sons and daughters of our people, the enemy's bullets, at the same time, pierced the works of Stalin which they guarded in their bosoms as a much cherished treasure.

Despite the open and disguised efforts of the internal and external enemies of the Soviet Union to sabotage socialism after World War II, the correctness of Stalin's policy set the tone in major international problems. The war-devastated land of the Soviets, which lost 20 million people on the battlefields, was reconstructed with astounding rapidity. This great work was carried out by the Soviet people, the working class and the collective farm peasantry, led by the Bolshevik Party and the great Stalin.

In the years of World War II revisionism emerged with the betrayal of Browder, ex-general secretary of the CP of the USA, who, together with his revisionist associates, dissolved the party and placed themselves in the service of American imperialism. Browder was for the liquidation of any demarcation line between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between capitalism and socialism, for their merging in a single world, was against the revolution and civil war and for the peaceful co-existence of classes in society. We can say that with this «white line», with his capitulationist policy, Browder preceded Tito, who, because of his anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist views and stands, entered into ideological and political conflict with the Soviet Union at the time of the war, although this conflict broke out openly after the war. After many patient efforts to bring the renegade Tito into line, when they were convinced he was incorrigible, Stalin, the Bolshevik Party and all the other genuine communist parties of the world unanimously condemned him. It became obvious that the work of Tito was in the service of world imperialism, therefore he relied on and was supported by American imperialism and the other capitalist states. Joining the chorus of the bourgeois propaganda and in order to earn the credits he received from the imperialists, Tito, among other things, slandered

that Stalin allegedly prepared the attack against Yugoslavia. Time proved that Tito was lying.

In the different talks which I have had the great honour to hold with Stalin, he has told me that there never was and never could be any thought of the Soviet Union attacking Yugoslavia. We are communists, said Stalin, and will never attack any foreign country, hence, Yugoslavia either, but we shall expose Tito and the Titoites, because that is our duty as Marxists. Whether they keep Tito in power or overthrow him in Yugoslavia, this is an internal question which it is up to the peoples of Yugoslavia to settle, it is not up to us to interfere in this affair, he said.

The Nikita Khrushchev gang was encouraged and supported in its slanders against Stalin by the renegade Josip Broz Tito, who had come out openly long before, and later by Mao Tsetung and company and other revisionists of various shades. In reality, all of them were minions of capitalism, set on destroying socialism in the Soviet Union from within, preventing socialism from being built in Yugoslavia, and hindering the construction of socialism in China and the whole world. That is why they opposed Stalin, in whom they saw the strong man, whom they were unable to put anything across while he was alive.

These traitors were the successors to the social-democrat, revisionist, opportunist renegades of

the Second International, the continuers of their inglorious work in other circumstances and conditions. They claimed that they were applying organizational forms of struggle «appropriate» to the situation and working out allegedly new ideas to «correct» and «complement» Marxism-Leninism in accord with the «spirit of the time», etc. Irrespective of any formal differences they manifested in their opinions and attitudes, all this scum had the one aim: to combat Marxism-Leninism, to negate the absolute necessity of the proletarian revolution, to destroy socialism, to quell the class struggle and prevent the overthrow of the old capitalist society to its very foundations.

Stalin was a genuine internationalist. He took good account of the special feature that the Soviet state was created by the union of many republics which were composed of many peoples, many nationalities, therefore he perfected the state organization of these republics while respecting their equal rights. With the correct Marxist-Leninist policy he pursued on the national question, Stalin succeeded in moulding and tempering the militant unity of the different peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. While at the head of the party and Soviet state, he made his contribution to transforming the prison of the peoples — the old czarist Russia, into a free, independent and sovereign country, where the

peoples and the republics lived in harmony, friendship, and unity with equal rights. Stalin knew the nations and their historical formation, he knew the different characteristics of the culture and psychology of each people and handled them in the Marxist-Leninist way.

The internationalism of Joseph Stalin is clearly apparent also in the relations that were established among the countries of people's democracy which he considered free, independent, sovereign states, close allies of the Soviet Union. He never envisaged these states as dominated by the Soviet Union, either politically or economically. This was a correct Marxist-Leninist policy which Stalin followed.

In my memoirs I have written of the request I made to Joseph Stalin in 1947 in regard to the creation of some joint Albanian-Soviet companies, which were to utilize our underground wealth. He told me that they did not set up joint companies with the fraternal countries of people's democracy, and explained to me that even some step which had been taken at first in this direction with some country of people's democracy, they had considered mistaken and given up. It is our duty, continued Stalin, to provide the countries of people's democracy with the technology we possess and the economic aid we are able to give, and we shall always be ready to support

them. This is what Stalin thought and that is how he acted.

The Khrushchevites, on the contrary, did not follow such a course. They embarked on the road of cunning capitalist collaboration, creating a military, political and economic «unity» with the former countries of people's democracy in their own interests and to the detriment of others.

They transformed the Warsaw Treaty into an instrument to keep their new colonies in bondage, in forms and ways allegedly socialist. They transformed Comecon from an organization of mutual economic aid, which it was in the time of Stalin, into a means of control and exploitation of its member countries.

Thus the policy of Joseph Stalin on all the major political, ideological and economic problems was one thing, while the policy of the Khrushchevite and other modern revisionists is quite another thing. Stalin's policy was principled and internationalist, while that of the Soviet revisionists is a capitalist policy, enslaving for the other peoples who have fallen or are falling into their trap.

The imperialists, Tito, the Khrushchevites and all other enemies accused Stalin, alleging that after World War II he divided up the spheres of influence in agreement with the former anti-fascist allies — the United States of America and Great Britain. Time has consigned this accusation to the rubbish bin, just as it did with all the rest. After

World War II, Stalin defended with exemplary justice the peoples, their national liberation struggle and their national and social rights against the greed of his former allies in the anti-fascist war.

The enemies of communism, ranging from international bourgeois reaction down to the Khrushchevites and all the other revisionists, have striven with every means to blacken and distort all the virtues, pure thoughts and just actions of this great Marxist-Leninist, and to discredit the first socialist state set up by Lenin and Stalin.

With great cunning the Khrushchevites, these new disciples of Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev and Tukhachevsky, incited conceit and the feeling of superiority in those who had taken part in the war. They encouraged privileges for the elite, opened the way to bureaucracy and liberalism in the party and the state, violated the true revolutionary norms, and gradually managed to implant the defeatist spirit among the people. They presented all the evils of their activity as if they were brought about by the «stern and sectarian stand, the method and style of work» of Stalin. This diabolical deed of those who cast the stone and hid the hand, served to deceive the working class, the collective farm peasantry and the intellectuals and to set in motion all the dissident elements who had remained concealed until that time. Dissident, career-seeking and degenerate elements were

told that the time of «genuine freedom» had come for them, and this «freedom» was brought about by Nikita Khrushchev and his group. This is how the ground was prepared for the destruction of socialism in the Soviet Union, for the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the establishment of a state of the «entire people» which in fact would be nothing but a dictatorial state of the fascist type, as it is now.

All this villainy emerged soon after the death, or to be more precise, after the murder of Stalin. I say after the murder of Stalin, because Mikoyan himself told me and Comrade Mehmet Shehu that they, together with Khrushchev and their associates. had decided to carry out a «pokushenie», i. e., to make an attempt on Stalin's life, but later, as Mikoyan told us, they gave up this plan. It is a known fact that the Khrushchevites could hardly wait for Stalin to die. The circumstances of his death are not clear.

An unsolved enigma in this direction is the question of the «white smocks», the trial conducted against the Kremlin doctors, who, as long as Stalin was alive were accused of having attempted to kill many leaders of the Soviet Union. After Stalin's death these doctors were rehabilitated and no more was said about this question! But why was this question hushed up?! Was the criminal activity of these doctors proved at the time of the trial, or not? The question of the doctors was

hushed up, because had it been investigated later, had it been gone into thoroughly, it would have brought to light a great deal of dirty linen, many crimes and plots that the concealed revisionists, with Khrushchev and Mikoyan at the head, had been perpetrating. This could be the explanation also for the sudden deaths within a very short time, of Gottwald, Bierut, Foster, Dimitrov and some others, all from curable illnesses, about which I have written in my unpublished memoirs, «The Khrushchevites and Us». This could prove to be the true reason for the sudden death of Stalin, too.

In order to attain their vile aims and to carry out their plans for the struggle against Marxism-Leninism and socialism, Khrushchev and his group liquidated many of the main leaders of the Comintern, one after the other, by silent and mysterious methods. Apart from others, they also attacked and discredited Rakosi, dismissed him from his post and interned him deep in the interior of the steppes of Russia, in this way.

In the «secret» report delivered at their 20th Congress, Nikita Khrushchev and his associates threw mud at Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin and tried to defile him in the filthiest manner, resorting to the most cynical Trotskyite methods. After compromising some of the cadres of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Khrushchevites exploited them thoroughly and then kicked them out and liquidated them as anti-

party elements. The Khrushchevites headed by Khrushchev, who condemned the cult of Stalin in order to cover up their subsequent crimes against the Soviet Union and socialism, raised the cult of Khrushchev sky-high.

Those top functionaries of the party and Soviet state attributed to Stalin the brutality, cunning perfidy and baseness of character, the imprisonments and murders which they themselves practised and which were second nature to them. As long as Stalin was alive it was precisely they who sang hymns of praise to him in order to cover up their careerism and their underhand aims and actions. In 1949 Khrushchev described Stalin as the «leader and teacher of genius», and said that «the name of Comrade Stalin is the banner of all the victories of the Soviet people, the banner of the struggle of the working people the world over». Mikoyan described the Works of Stalin as a «new, higher historical stage of Leninism». Kosygin said, «We owe all our victories and successes to the great Stalin», etc., etc. While after his death they behaved quite differently. It was the Khrushchevites who strangled the voice of the party, strangled the voice of the working class and filled the concentration camps with patriots; it was they who released the dregs of treachery from prison, the Trotskyites and all the enemies, whom time and the facts had proved and have proved again now with their struggle as dissidents to be opponents

of socialism and agents in the service of foreign capitalist enemies.

It is the Khrushchevites who, in conspiratorial and mysterious ways, «tried» and condemned not only the Soviet revolutionaries but also many persons from other countries. In my notes I have written of a meeting with the Soviet leaders, at which Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Molotov and some others were present. As Mikoyan was to go to Austria, Molotov turned to him and said half-jokingly: «Be careful not to make a 'mess' in Austria, as you did in Hungary». I immediately asked Molotov: «Why, was it Mikoyan who made the 'mess' in Hungary?» He replied: «Yes», and went on to say, «if Mikoyan goes back there again, they will hang him». Mikoyan, this covert anti-Marxist cosmopolitan answered: «If they hang me, they will hang Kadar, too». But even if those two were hanged, intrigues and villainy still remain immoral.

Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Suslov first defended the conspirator Imre Nagy, and then condemned and executed him secretly somewhere in Rumania! Who gave them the right to act in that way with a foreign citizen? Although he was a conspirator, he should have been subject only to trial in his own country and not to any foreign law, court or punishment. Stalin never did such things.

No, Stalin never acted in that way. He con-

ducted public trials against the traitors to the party and Soviet state. The party and the Soviet peoples were told openly of the crimes they had committed. You never find in Stalin's actions such Mafia-like methods as you find in the actions of the Soviet revisionist chiefs.

The Soviet revisionists have used and are still using such methods against one another in their struggle for power, just as in every capitalist country. Khrushchev seized power through a putsch, and Brezhnev toppled him from the throne with a putsch.

Brezhnev and company got rid of Khrushchev to protect the revisionist policy and ideology from the discredit and exposure resulting from his crazy behaviour and actions and embarrassing buffoonery. He did not in any way reject Khrushchevism, the reports and decisions of the 20th and 22nd Congresses in which Khrushchevism is embodied. Brezhnev showed himself to be so ungrateful to Khrushchev, whom he had previously lauded so high, that he could not even find a hole in the wall of the Kremlin to put his ashes when he died! Meanwhile, neither the Soviet peoples, nor world opinion have ever been informed of the real reasons for Khrushchev's downfall. Even to this day, the «main reason» provided by the revisionist documents is «his advanced age and deteriorating state of health»!!

Stalin was not at all what the enemies of com-

munism accused and accuse him of being. On the contrary, he was just and a man of principle. He knew how to help and combat those who made mistakes, knew how to support, encourage and point out the special merits of those who served Marxism-Leninism loyally, as the occasion required. The question of Rokossovsky and that of Zhukov are now well known. When Rokossovsky and Zhukov made mistakes they were criticized and discharged from their posts. But they were not cast off as incorrigible. On the contrary, they were warmly assisted and the moment it was considered that these cadres had corrected themselves, Stalin elevated them to responsible positions, promoted them marshals and at the time of the Great Patriotic War charged them with extremely important duties on the main fronts of the war against the Hitlerite invaders. Only a leader who had a clear concept of and applied Marxist-Leninist justice in evaluating the work of people, with their good points and errors, could have acted as Stalin did.

Following Stalin's death, Marshal Zhukov became a tool of Nikita Khrushchev and his group; he supported the treacherous activity of Khrushchev against the Soviet Union, the Bolshevik Party and Stalin. Eventually, Nikita Khrushchev tossed Zhukov away like a squeezed lemon. He did the same with Rokossovsky and many other main cadres.

Many Soviet communists were deceived by the demagogy of the Krushchevite revisionist group and thought that after Stalin's death the Soviet Union would become a real paradise, as the revisionist traitors started to trumpet. They declared with great pomp that in 1980 communism would be established in the Soviet Union!! But what happened? The opposite, and it could not be otherwise. The revisionists seized power not to make the Soviet Union prosper, but to turn it back into a capitalist country, as they did, to make it economically subject to world capital, to form secret and open agreements with American imperialism, to subjugate the peoples of the countries of people's democracy under the guise of military and economic treaties, to keep these states in bondage, to create markets and spheres of influence in the world. Such were the Khrushchevites who exploited the successful construction of socialism in the Soviet Union, and turned these successes on to such a retrograde course that they created a new class of the social-imperialist bourgeoisie to make the Soviet Union an imperialist world power which, together with the United States of America, would rule the world. Stalin had forewarned the party of this danger. Khrushchev himself admitted to us that Stalin had said to them that they would sell out the Soviet Union to imperialism. And this is what happened in fact. What he said has proved true.

In the existing situation the peoples of the world, the world proletariat, logical people with pure hearts, can judge for themselves the correctness of Stalin's stands. But people can judge the correctness of his Marxist-Leninist line only in a broad political, ideological, economic and military panorama.

Up till yesterday, the bourgeoisie and the revisionists, falsifying history through their propaganda, have blackened Stalin's activity in people's minds, but now that people are clear about what the Khrushchevites, Titoites, Maoists, the «Eurocommunists» and others are, and what the Hitlerites were, what the American imperialists and world capitalism are, they know why Stalin fought, why the Bolsheviks fought, why the proletarians and true Marxist-Leninists are fighting, and what their enemies, the currents and trends in the service of capitalism and the revisionists fight for. Those who think that communism has «failed» always have been and will surely be disappointed. Time is proving every day that our doctrine is alive and omnipotent.

Any person who assesses Stalin's work as a whole can understand that the genius and communist spirit of this outstanding personality are rare in the modern world.

The great cause of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, the cause of socialism and communism, is the future of the world.

We Albanian communists have successfully applied the teachings of Stalin, in the first place, in order to have a strong steel-like Party, always loyal to Marxism-Leninism, stern against the class enemies, and have taken great care to preserve the unity of thought and action in the Party and to strengthen the unity of the Party with the people. We have followed Stalin's teachings on the construction of socialist industry and the collectivization of agriculture, and have scored major successes. Our Party and people will fight for the constant strengthening of the close alliance of the working class with the peasantry under the leadership of the working class. We will never be deceived by the flattery and tricks of enemies, whether internal or external, but will continue the class struggle, both internally and externally, and will always be vigilant towards their evil activity. Otherwise, if we had not proved vigilant, if we had not applied the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin faithfully, Albania would have sunk into the mire of modern revisionism, would no longer be independent and socialist, and we would no longer have the dictatorship of the proletariat, but slavery to the imperialist-revisionist powers.

Our Party and people will continue the road of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin and Joseph Stalin. The future genera-

tions of socialist Albania will loyally follow the line of their beloved Party.

The Albanians, communists and non-party patriots, bow in respect to the memory of the glorious teacher, Joseph Stalin. On the occasion of the centenary of his birth, we remember with devotion the man who helped us, who enabled us to multiply the forces of our people whom the Party made the all-powerful masters of their own destiny. For the deed of the liberation and the construction of socialism in our country also we are indebted to the internationalist aid of Stalin. His rich and very valuable experience has guided us on our road and in our activity.

In this jubilee year, our Party is engaged in continuous wide-ranging activity to make the glorious life and work of the great Marxist-Leninist Joseph Stalin even better known. All the activity of our Party, from its founding to the present day, testifies to its love and respect for and loyalty to the immortal doctrine of our great classics, and hence to the ideas of Joseph Stalin. And so it will be in our country, generation after generation.

I, as a militant of the Party, as one of its leaders, whom the Party has honoured by sending me several times to meet Comrade Stalin, to talk v/ith him about our problems, our situation and to seek his advice and help, have tried to record my recollections of these meetings at the proper time, just as I have felt and seen the behaviour of

Stalin towards the representative of a small party and people like ours. In making these simple memoirs available for publication, I proceeded from the desire to help our communists, working people and youth become acquainted with the figure of that great and immortal man.

In this glorious anniversary, I bow in devotion and loyalty to the Party and the people that gave birth to me, raised me and tempered me, and to Joseph Stalin who has given me such valuable advice for the happiness of my people and left indelible memories in my heart and mind.

For us Marxist-Leninists and the innumerable sympathizers with the lofty ideals of the working class throughout the world, this centenary must serve to strengthen the fighting unity of our ranks.

Now, the commemoration of this great jubilee of Stalin's birth is the time for profound reflection by honest people everywhere in the world to find the correct road, to dispel from their minds the fog created by the capitalist bourgeoisie, the revisionist bourgeoisie, with the aim of paralysing the revolutionary drive and the revolutionary thought of the masses. Revolutionary thought and action will lead the men of good will, the just men, the men of the people, on to the road of their escape from the yoke of capital.

In commemorating Stalin and his work on the centenary of his birth, we Marxist-Leninists cannot fail to address ourselves directly to the peoples of the Soviet Union to tell them in the most frank and sincere manner:

You, who fought and triumphed over the most dangerous enemies of humanity with the name of Stalin on your lips, what are you going to do, are you going to remain silent on the occasion of this great jubilee?

Since they cannot conceal the name and brilliant work of Stalin, the Khrushchevite revisionists, who left nothing unsaid against him, may write some few feeble words about him. But it is up to you, who carried out the Great October Revolution, to remember your brilliant leader with profound respect. You must destroy the dictatorial fascist regime which is hidden behind deceptive slogans. You must know that those who are leading you are fascists, chauvinists and imperialists. They are preparing you as cannon fodder for a fierce imperialist war, to kill the peoples and burn and devastate countries which had great hopes in the Homeland of Lenin and Stalin. This is not what the peoples of the world want you to be. If you go on like this, they can no longer respect you, but will hate you.

The peoples of the world hate your present counterrevolutionary leaders, because the atomic weapons they are producing, the parades in Red

Square and the military manoeuvres they are organizing, have become threatening to the peoples and their freedom, just like those of American imperialism and world capitalism. The weapons and the army in the Soviet Union are no longer in the hands of the Soviet peoples and do not serve the liberation of the world proletariat. On the contrary, they are intended to oppress the Soviet and other peoples.

You must understand and realize that the enemies have long since turned you from the road of the revolution. The Khrushchevite revisionists are seeking to arouse in you feelings of superiority and domination over others. They claim they are using your great strength allegedly to combat American imperialism and world capitalism, but this is false. Your rulers are in contradiction and alliance with American imperialism and world capitalism, not in the interests of the revolution, but because of their imperialist ambitions and greed for the division of spheres of influence and domination over the peoples.

The peoples of the world are worried whether you, the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of those glorious fighters who carried out the Great October Socialist Revolution, you, the Soviet proletarians, collective farmers, soldiers and intellectuals, will proceed on this course hostile to the peoples, on to which those who rule you have led you, or will rise and fight on the revolution-

ary road with the names of Lenin and Stalin on your lips. The hope and desire of the world is that you will take the road of the revolution and march forward, shouting like your forbears: «za Lenina!», «za Stalina!»*, for genuine socialism and against imperialism, social-imperialism and revisionism.

The traitor leadership does not inform you correctly about the sufferings of other peoples who are being killed in the streets in demonstrations against the blood-thirsty capitalists and imperialists. They do not tell you the truth about why the people in Iran, thirsting for freedom and independence, rise to their feet and topple the tyrannical Shah, the tool of the American imperialists. The Khrushchevite revisionist clique keep you in the dark about the sufferings of the Arab peoples, the peoples of the American continent and all the continents of the world, because it is imperialism and your treacherous leaders who inflict these sufferings on them. They tell you nothing about how they oppress the peoples of Africa, using your men and their vassals, you do not know about the intrigues the new Czars of the Kremlin hatch up in the world, you are not told that the friends of the Khrushchevites, the friends of your leadership to whom Nikita Khrushchev and his followers, headed by Brezhnev, opened the road of betrayal, are making common cause with the capi-

* «for Lenin!», «for Stalin!» (Russ.).

talists to the detriment of the working class and the interests of their peoples. You don't know many things about the sufferings and persecution of honest people in your country, because the present gang which oppresses you is silent about such things.

You must know that the peoples have risen in revolution, that they are fighting heroically, while you, who constitute a great force, allow your traitor leaders to oppress you, delude you and put you to sleep.

A gang of overlords has turned your country into a social-imperialist power. The road to salvation is that of the revolution which Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin have taught us. The Brezhnevs, Kosygins, Ustinovs and Yakubovskys, like the Solzhenitsyns and Sakharovs, are counterrevolutionaries and as such must be overthrown and liquidated.

You are a great power, but you have to regain the trust of the world proletariat, the trust of the peoples of the world, that great trust that Lenin and Stalin created through work and struggle. **You must not delay reflecting deeply about your future and that of mankind. The time has come for you to become what you were when Lenin and Stalin were alive — glorious participants in the proletarian revolution. Therefore, you must not remain under the yoke of enemies of the revolution and the peoples, enemies of the freedom**

and independence of states. You must never allow yourselves to become tools of an imperialism which is seeking to enslave the peoples, using Leninism as a mask.

If you follow the road of the revolution and Marxism-Leninism, if you link yourselves closely with the world proletariat, then American imperialism and the decaying capitalism in general will be shaken to their very foundations, the face of the world will be changed and socialism will triumph.

You, the Soviet peoples, Soviet workers, collective farmers and soldiers, have great responsibilities and duties to mankind. You can perform these duties honourably by refusing to tolerate the domination of the barbarous clique which now prevails over the once glorious Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Stalin and over you.

In your country the party is no longer a Marxist-Leninist party. You must build a new party of the Lenin-Stalin type through struggle. You must understand that the Soviet Union is no longer a union of peoples for freedom, in full harmony with one another. It was Bolshevism which succeeded in creating the fraternal unity of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Revisionism has done the opposite: it has split the peoples of your country, has aroused chauvinism in every republic, has incited hostility amongst them, has aroused the hatred of other peoples against the Russian

people, who were the vanguard in the revolution under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin.

Will you go on allowing yourselves to be downtrodden? Will you go on allowing the deepening of the process of bourgeois degeneration in all fields of life in your country, as the revisionists are doing? Will you accept the yoke of a new capital, under the cloak of a false socialism?

We Albanian communists and people, like all the communists and freedom-loving peoples of the world, have loved the true socialist Soviet Union of the time of Lenin and Stalin. We resolutely follow the road of Lenin and Stalin and have faith in the great revolutionary strength of the Soviet peoples, the Soviet proletariat, and that is why we are convinced that this strength will gradually express itself, through struggle and sacrifices, will be built up to the level the time demands and will smash Soviet social-imperialism to its very foundations.

The revolution and sacrifices you will make will not weaken your country but will revive the true socialist Soviet Union. They will overthrow the socialimperialist dictatorship and the Soviet Union will emerge from this stronger than ever. In this glorious work you will have the support of all the peoples of the world and the world proletariat. The strength of the ideas of socialism and communism is based on this revolutionary overthrow and not on the empty words and underhand

actions of the clique ruling you. Only in this way, proceeding on this course, will the genuine communists, the Marxist-Leninists everywhere in the world, be able to defeat imperialism and world capitalism. They will assist the peoples of the world to liberate themselves, one after the other, will assist great China to set out on the genuine road to socialism and not become a superpower so that it, too, can rule the world, by transforming itself into a third partner in the predatory wars which American imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism and the clique of Hua Kuo-feng and Teng Hsiao-ping which is ruling in China at present, are preparing.

In this glorious jubilee, we Albanian communists, as loyal pupils of Lenin and Stalin and soldiers of the revolution, remind you to think over these problems, vital to you and the world, because we are your brothers, your comrades in the cause of the proletarian revolution and the liberation of the peoples. If you follow the road of the predatory, imperialist war, on which your renegade leaders are taking you, then, without doubt, we shall remain enemies of your system and your counterrevolutionary actions. This is as clear as the light of the day. It cannot be otherwise.

When we are convinced that we are acting correctly, we Albanian communists, linked with our people like flesh to bone, do not heave to in

the face of even the fiercest storm. And we are convinced that we shall weather any storm, just as the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet power did, just as the great Captains of the revolution, Lenin and Stalin, weathered them.

MEMOIRS

From my meetings with Stalin

FIRST MEETING

July 1947

The external situation of the PRA. Its relations with the neighbouring states and the Anglo-Americans. The Corfu Channel incident and the Hague Court. The political, economic and social-class situation in Albania. Stalin's all-round interest in and high estimation of our country, people and Party. «For a party to be in power and remain illegal, doesn't make sense». «Your Communist Party can call itself the Party of Labour».

On July 14, 1947 I arrived in Moscow at the head of the first official delegation of the Government of the People's Republic of Albania and the Communist Party of Albania on a friendly visit to the Soviet Union.

The joy of my comrades and I, that we were appointed by the Central Committee of the Party to go to Moscow where we would meet the great Stalin, was indescribable. Since the time when we

first became acquainted with the Marxist-Leninist theory, we had always dreamed, night and day, of meeting Stalin. During the period of the Anti-fascist National Liberation War this desire had grown even stronger. Next to the outstanding figures of Marx, Engels and Lenin, Comrade Stalin was extremely respected and dear to us, because his teachings led us to the founding of the Communist Party of Albania as a party of the Leninist type, inspired us during the National Liberation War and were helping us in the construction of socialism.

The talks with Stalin and his advice would be a guide in the great and arduous work which we were doing to consolidate the victories achieved.

For all these reasons, our first visit to the Soviet Union was a cause for indescribable joy and great satisfaction not only for the communists and for us, the members of the delegation, but also for the entire Albanian people, who had been eagerly awaiting this visit and hailed it with great enthusiasm.

As we saw with our own eyes and felt in our hearts, Stalin and the Soviet Government welcomed our delegation in a very cordial and warm manner, with sincere affection. During the twelve days of our stay in Moscow we met Comrade Stalin several times, and the talks which we held with him, his sincere, comradely advice and in-

structions, have remained and will remain forever dear to us.

The day of my first meeting with Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin will remain unforgettable. It was the 16th of July 1947, the third day of our stay in Moscow. It was an extraordinary day from the outset: in the morning we went to the Mausoleum of the great Lenin where we bowed our heads in deep respect before the body of the brilliant leader of the revolution, before that man whose name and colossal work was deeply engraved in our minds and hearts, and had enlightened us on the glorious road of our struggle for freedom, the revolution and socialism. On this occasion, in the name of the Albanian people, our Communist Party and in my own name personally, I laid a wreath of many-coloured flowers at the entrance to the Mausoleum of the immortal Lenin. From there, after visiting the graves of the valiant fighters of the October Socialist Revolution, the outstanding militants of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state, buried in the walls of the Kremlin, we went to the Central Museum of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. For more than two hours we went from one hall to the other, acquainting ourselves at first-hand with documents and exhibits which reflected in detail the life and outstanding work of the great Lenin. Before we left, in the Visitors'

Book of the Museum, among others, I also wrote these words: «The cause of Lenin will live on forever in the future generations. The memory of him will live forever in the hearts of the Albanian people».

That same day, full of indelible impressions and emotions, we were received by the disciple and loyal continuer of the work of Lenin, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, who talked with us at length.

From the beginning he created such a comradely atmosphere that we were very quickly relieved of that natural emotion which we felt when we entered his office, a large room, with a long table for meetings, close to his writing desk. Only a few minutes after exchanging the initial courtesies, we felt as though we were not talking to the great Stalin, but sitting with a comrade, whom we had met before and with whom we had talked many times. I was still young then, and the representative of a small party and country, therefore, in order to create the warmest and most comradely atmosphere for me, Stalin cracked some jokes and then began to speak with affection and great respect about our people, about their militant traditions of the past and their heroism in the National Liberation War. He spoke quietly, calmly and with a characteristic warmth which put me at ease.

Among other things, Comrade Stalin told us that he felt deep admiration for our people as a very ancient people of the Balkan region and with a long and valorous history.

«I have acquainted myself, especially, with the heroism displayed by the Albanian people during the Anti-fascist National Liberation War,» he continued, «but, of course, this knowledge of mine cannot be broad and deep enough. Therefore, I would like you to tell us a little about your country, your people and the problems which are worrying you today.»

After this, I began to speak and gave Comrade Stalin a description of the long and glorious historic road of our people, of their ceaseless wars for freedom and independence. I dwelt in particular on the period of the years of our National Liberation War, spoke about the founding of our Communist Party as a party of the Leninist type, about the decisive role it played and was playing as the only leading force in the war and the efforts of the Albanian people to win the freedom and independence of the Homeland, to overthrow the old feudal-bourgeois power, to set up the new people's power and to lead the country successfully towards profound socialist transformations. Availing myself of this opportunity, I thanked Comrade Stalin once again and expressed to him the deep gratitude of the Albanian communists and the entire Albanian people for the ardent sup-

port which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government and he personally had given our people and Party during the years of the war and were giving after the liberation of the Homeland.

I went on to describe to Comrade Stalin the deep-going political, economic and social transformations which had been carried out and were being consolidated, step by step, in Albania in the first years of the people's power. «The internal political and economic situation of Albania,» I told him among other things, «has improved appreciably. These improvements have their base in the correct understanding of the need to overcome the difficulties and in the great efforts of the people and the Party to overcome these difficulties with toil and sweat. Our people are convinced of the correctness of their road and have unshakeable confidence in the Communist Party, the Government of our People's Republic, in their own constructive forces, and in their sincere friends, and day by day are carrying out the tasks set to them, with a high level of mobilization, self-denial and enthusiasm.»

Comrade Stalin expressed his joy over the successes of our people and Party in their work of construction and was interested to learn something more about the situation of classes in our country. He was especially interested in our working class and peasantry. He asked a lot of ques-

tions about these two classes of our society, about which we exchanged many ideas that were to serve us later in organizing a sound work in the ranks of the working class and the poor and middle peasantry, and were to help us, also, in defining the stands that should be maintained towards the wealthy elements of the city and the kulaks in the country side.

«The overwhelming majority of our people», I told Comrade Stalin, among other things, in reply to his questions, «is comprised of poor peasants, and next come the middle peasants. We have a working class small in numbers, then we have quite a large number of craftsmen and townspeople engaged in petty commerce, and a minority of intellectuals. All these masses of working people responded to the call of our Communist Party, were mobilized in the war for the liberation of the Homeland and now are closely linked with the Party and the people's power.»

«Has the working class of Albania any tradition of class struggle?» Comrade Stalin asked.

«Before the liberation of the country,» I told him, «this class was very small. It had just been created and was made up of a number of wage earners, apprentices or artisans dispersed among small enterprises and workshops. In the past, the workers in some towns of our country came out in strikes, but these were small and uncoordinated, due both to the small number of the workers and

to the lack of organization in trade-unions. Irrespective of this,» I told Comrade Stalin, «our Communist Party was founded as a party of the working class, which would be led by the Marxist-Leninist ideology and would express and defend the interests of the proletariat and the broad working masses, in the first place, of the Albanian peasantry, which constituted the majority of our population.»

Comrade Stalin asked us in detail about the situation of the middle and poor peasants in our country.

In reply to his questions, I told Comrade Stalin about the policy which our Party had followed, and the great, all-round work it had done since its founding in order to find support among the peasantry and to win it over to its side.

«We acted in that way,» I said, «proceeding not only from the Marxist-Leninist principle that the peasantry is the closest and most natural ally of the proletariat in the revolution, but also from the fact that the peasantry in Albania constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population and through the centuries has been characterized by great patriotic and revolutionary traditions.» Continuing our talk, I tried to describe the economic situation of the peasants after the liberation of the country, as well as their cultural and technical level. Besides affirming the lofty virtues of our

peasantry as patriotic, hard-working, closely linked with the soil and the Homeland, and thirsting for freedom, development, and progress, I also spoke of the pronounced hangovers of the past and the economic and cultural backwardness of our peasantry, as well as of its deeply implanted petty-bourgeois mentality. «Our Party,» I stressed, «has had to fight with all its strength against this situation and we have achieved some successes, but we are aware that we must fight harder and more persistently in order to make the peasantry conscious, so that it will embrace and implement the line of the Party at every step.»

Comrade Stalin replied: «In general, the peasants are afraid of communism at first because they imagine that the communists will take the land and everything they have. The enemies,» he continued, «talk a great deal to the peasants in this direction with the aim of detaching them from the alliance with the working class and turning them away from the policy of the party and the road of socialism. Therefore the careful and far-sighted work of the Communist Party is very important, as you also said, to ensure that the peasantry links itself indissolubly with the party and the working class.»

On this occasion, I also gave Comrade Stalin a general outline of the social-class structure of our Party and explained that this structure faithfully reflected the very social structure of our people.

«This is the reason,» I said, «why communists of peasant social status at present comprise the largest number of the members of our Party. The policy of our Party in this direction is that, step by step, parallel with the growth of the working class, the number of worker communists should increase respectively.»

While assessing the policy which our Party had followed towards the masses in general and the peasantry in particular as correct, Comrade Stalin gave us some valuable, comradely advice about our work in the future. Apart from other things, he expressed the opinion that since the biggest percentage of its members were peasants, our Communist Party should call itself «The Party of Labour of Albania». «However,» he stressed, «this is only an idea of mine, because it is you, your Party, that must decide.»

After thanking Comrade Stalin for this valuable idea, I said:

«We shall put forward your proposal at the 1st Congress of the Party for which we are preparing, and I am confident that both the rank-and-file of the Party and its leadership will find it appropriate and endorse it». Then I went on to expound to Comrade Stalin our idea about making our Party completely legal at the congress which we were preparing.

«In reality,» I said among other things, «our Communist Party has been and is the only force

which plays the leading role in the entire life of the country but formally it still retains its semi-illegal status. It seems to us incorrect that this situation should continue any longer.»[1]

«Quite right, quite right,» replied Comrade Stalin. «For a party to be in power and remain illegal or consider itself illegal, doesn't make sense.»

Going on to other questions, in connection with our armed forces, I explained to Comrade Stalin that the overwhelming majority of our army, which had emerged from the war, was made up of poor peasants, young workers and city intellectuals. The cadres of the army, the commanding officers had emerged from the war and had gained their experience of leadership in the course of the war.

I also spoke about the Soviet instructors we already had and asked him to send us some more.

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1 The 11th Plenum of the CC of the CPA which met from 13-24th of September 1948 and the 1st Congress of the CPA decided on the complete and immediate legalization of the CPA. Both the Plenum and the Congress considered the keeping of the Party until that time in a semi-illegal status a mistake which had come about as a result of the pressure and influence of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership, which, for ulterior motives, while considering the Front the main leading force of the country, demanded that the Party should be merged with the Front, hence underrating and negating the Communist Party itself and its leading role both in the Front and in the whole life of the country.

«Having insufficient experience,» I said, «the political work we carry out in the ranks of the army is weak, therefore I requested that they examined this question in order to help us raise the political work in the army to a higher level. It is true that we also have Yugoslav instructors,» I said, «and I cannot say that they have no experience at all, but, in fact their experience is limited. They, too, have emerged from a great national liberation war, nevertheless, they cannot be compared with the Soviet officers.»

After speaking about the high morale of our army, about its discipline, as well as a series of other problems, I asked Comrade Stalin to assign me a Soviet comrade with whom I would talk at greater length about the problems of our army and its needs for the future in more detail.

And then I raised the problem of strengthening our coastal defences.

«In particular, we need to strengthen the defences of Sazan Island and the coast of Vlora and Durrës,» I said, «because these are very delicate positions. The enemy has attacked us there on two occasions. Later we could be attacked there by the Anglo-Americans or the Italians.»

«As for the strengthening of your coastal defences,» said Comrade Stalin among other things, «I agree with you. For our part, we shall help you, but the arms and other means of defence must be used by Albanians and not by Sov-

iet forces. True, the mechanism of some of them is a bit complicated but you must send your people here to learn how to use them.»

In connection with my request about sending political instructors for the army to Albania, Comrade Stalin said that they could not send us any more, because in order to work well, they must know the Albanian language and should also have a good knowledge of the situation and life of the Albanian people. «Therefore,» he advised us, «it would be better for us to send people to the Soviet Union to learn from the Soviet experience and apply this experience themselves in the ranks of the Albanian People's Army.»

Then, Comrade Stalin inquired about the attempts of internal reaction in Albania and our stand towards it.

«We have struck and continue to strike hard at internal reaction,» I told him. «We have had successes in our struggle to expose and defeat it. As for the physical liquidation of enemies, this has been done either in the direct clashes of our forces with the bands of armed criminals, or according to verdicts of people's courts in the trials of traitors and the closest collaborators of the occupiers. Despite the successes achieved, we still cannot say that internal reaction is no longer active. It is not capable of organizing any really dangerous attack upon us. but still it is making propaganda against us.

«The external enemy supports the internal enemy for its own purposes. External reaction tries to assist, encourage, and organize the internal enemy by means of agents, whom it has sent in by land or by air. Faced with the endeavours of the enemy, we have raised the revolutionary vigilance of the working masses. The people have captured these agents and a number of trials have been held against them. The public trials and sentences have had a great educational effect among the people and have aroused their confidence in the strength of our people's state power, and their respect for its justice. At the same time, these trials have exposed and demoralized the reactionary forces, both internal and external.»

In the talks that followed with Comrade Stalin we devoted an important place to problems of the external situation, especially the relations of our state with the neighbouring countries. First, I outlined the situation on our borders, spoke of the good relations we had with the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, while I dwelt in particular on our relations with Greece, in order to explain the situation on our southern border. I stressed that the Greek monarcho-fascists, who failed to realize their dream of «Greater Greece» that is, of seizing Southern Albania, were still committing innumerable border provocations. «Their aim,» I told Comrade Stalin, «is to create a

conflagration on our border, and in the wake of the war, to create a tense situation in the relations between Greece and us.» I explained that we were trying, as far as we were able, to avert the provocations of the Greek monarcho-fascists, and not respond to them. «Only when they go too far from time to time and kill our people,» I went on, «we take retaliatory measures to make the monarcho-fascists understand that Albania and its borders are inviolable. If they think of embarking on dangerous activities against the independence of Albania. they must know that we are in a position to defend our Homeland.

«All the aims of the monarcho-fascists and their efforts to blame Albania for the civil war which has broken out in Greece, in order to discredit our people's power at the meetings of the Security Council and at all international meetings, are instigated and supported by the imperialist powers.» After dwelling extensively and at length on this situation, I gave Comrade Stalin a general outline of what stands we maintained at the Investigating Commission and the sub-commissions which had been created to clear up the tense situation in the relations between Albania and Greece.

I told Comrade Stalin everything we knew about the situation of the Greek democrats and also spoke of the support we gave their just struggle. I did not fail to inform him openly also of

our opinion in connection with a series of views of the comrades of the Greek Communist Party which seemed to us to be wrong. Likewise, I also expressed my own opinion on the prospects of the struggle of the Greek democrats.

Although Comrade Stalin must undoubtedly have been informed by Comrades Molotov, Vyshinsky and others, I mentioned the savage and despicable stands of the British and American imperialists towards Albania, stressing the brutal, unscrupulous and hostile stands they maintained towards us at the Paris Conference. I emphasized also that the situation between us and the Anglo-Americans had not altered in the least, that we considered their stand a constant threat. Not only were the Anglo-Americans continuing their very hostile propaganda against Albania in the international arena, but via Italy and Greece, they were committing land and air provocations, using as their subversive agents Albanian fugitives, Zogites, Ballists and fascists, whom they had assembled. organized and trained against us in the concentration camps which they had set up in Italy and elsewhere.

Likewise. I spoke about the British imperialists' raising the so-called Corfu Channel incident at the Security Council of the UNO and its investigation by the International Court at the Hague. «The Corfu Channel incident,» I told Comrade Stalin, «is a concoction of the British from

start to finish in order to provoke our country and to find a pretext for military intervention in the town of Saranda. We have never planted mines in the Ionian Sea. The mines that exploded had either been laid by the Germans in the time of war, or were deliberately laid by the British, later, so that they could explode them when some ships of theirs were in our territorial waters heading for Saranda. There was no reason for these ships to be sailing along our coast, they had not notified us about such a movement. After the mines went off, the British claimed that they had suffered material damage and loss of life. They wanted to enlarge the incident. We do not know the British suffered the damage they claimed and do not believe that they did. however, even if they did, we are in no way to blame.

«We are defending our rights at the International Court at the Hague, but this court is being manipulated by the Anglo-American imperialists, who are trumping up all sorts of charges in order to cover up their provocation and force us pay the British an indemnity.»

I spoke with Comrade Stalin also about the Moscow Conference[1], argued in support of our

1 The Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Britain and France was held in Moscow from March 10 to April 24, 1947. The Conference discussed questions related to the Peace Treaty with Germany. At this Conference the representatives of the Soviet Union,

opinion about the Truman Doctrine in connection with Greece and the interference of the Anglo-Americans in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Albania and explained our stand towards the «Marshall Plan», saying that we would not accept «aid» under this ill-famed plan.

I also discussed with Comrade Stalin the problem of the extradition of war criminals who had fled our country. In all justice, we demanded that the governments of the countries which had given asylum to the war criminals should hand them over to us, to render account for their crimes before the people, though we knew that they would not do this because they were contingents of the Anglo-Americans and fascism in general.

I also put forward to Comrade Stalin the opinion of our Party about our relations with Italy. Italy had attacked us twice. It had burned our homes and killed our citizens, but we were Marxists, internationalists and wanted to have friendly relations with the Italian people. «The present government of Italy,» I told Comrade Stalin, «maintains a reactionary stand towards us; its aims towards our country are no different from those of former Italian governments. This government, under the influence of the Anglo-Americans, wants Albania to

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Molotov and Vyshinsky, defended Albania's right to take part in the Peace Conference with Germany. This stand was also supported by the French representative, but was opposed by the representatives of Britain and the United States of America.

be dependent on it in one way or another, a thing which will never occur. To this end,» I continued, «the Anglo-Americans, together with the government in Rome, are maintaining and training on Italian soil contingents of fugitives whom they parachute into Albania as wreckers. They are making many attempts against our country, casting the stone and hiding the hand, but we are aware of all their aims. We want to have diplomatic relations with Italy, but the mentality of the Italian statesmen is negative in this direction.»

After listening to me attentively, Stalin said: «Despite all the difficulties and obstacles they are creating for you, the Americans and the British cannot attack you in this situation. Faced with your resolute stand, they cannot land on your territory, therefore do not worry. However, you must defend your Homeland, must take all measures to strengthen your army and your borders, because the danger of war from the imperialists exists.

«The Greek monarcho-fascists,» Stalin continued, «abetted and supported by the American and British imperialists, will continue to provoke you just to harass you and to disturb your peace. The men in the government in Athens today have trouble on their hand,» he said, «because the civil war, which has broken out there, is directed against them and their patrons — the British and the Americans.

«As for Italy,» Comrade Stalin continued,

«the question is as you present it. The Anglo-Americans will try to create bases there, to organize reaction and strengthen the De Gasperi Government. In this direction you must be vigilant and watch what the Albanian fugitives are up to there. Since the treaties have not been concluded,» said Comrade Stalin, «the situation cannot be regarded as normalized. I think that, for the time being, you cannot establish relations with that country, therefore don't rush things.»

«We agree,» I said to Comrade Stalin, «that we should not be hasty in our relations with Italy, and in general we shall take measures to strengthen our borders.»

«We have proposed to the Yugoslavs,» I continued my exposition to Comrade Stalin, «that we establish contacts with each other and collaborate on the future defence of our borders from some eventual attack from Greece and Italy, but they have not replied to our proposal, claiming that they can discuss the matter with us only after studying the question. The collaboration we propose consists in the exchange of information with the Yugoslavs on the dangers that may threaten us from the external enemies, so that each country, within its own borders and with its own armies, is in a position to take appropriate measures to cope with any eventuality.» I also informed Comrade Stalin that we had two divisions of our army on our southern border.

During the conversation I underlined the fact that some Yugoslav aircraft had landed in Tirana contrary to the recognized and accepted rules of relations among states. «From time to time,» I said, « without informing us, the Yugoslav comrades do some condemnable things, as in this concrete case. It is not right that the Yugoslav aircraft should fly over Albanian territory without the knowledge of the Albanian Government. We have pointed out this violation to the Yugoslav comrades and they have replied that they made a mistake. Although we are friends, we cannot permit them to infringe our territorial integrity. We are independent states, and without damaging our friendly relations, each must protect its sovereignty and rights, while at the same time, respecting the sovereignty and rights of the other.»

«Are your people not happy about the relations with Yugoslavia?» Comrade Stalin asked me, and added. «It is a very good thing that you have friendly Yugoslavia on your border, because Albania is a small country and as such needs strong support from its friends.»

I replied that it was true that every country, small or big. needed friends and allies and that we considered Yugoslavia a friendly country.

With Comrade Stalin and Comrade Molotov we talked in detail about the problems of the re-

construction of our country ravaged by the war and the construction of the new Albania. I gave them a description of the state of our economy, the first socialist transformations in the economy and the great prospects which were opening up to us, the successes which we had achieved and the problems and great difficulties we were facing.

Stalin expressed his satisfaction over the victories we had achieved and, time after time, put various questions to me. He was particularly interested in the state of our agriculture, the climatic conditions in Albania, the agricultural crops traditional to our people, etc.

«What cereals do you cultivate most?» he asked me among other things.

«Maize, first of all,» I said. «Then wheat, rye...»

«Isn't the maize worried by drought?»

«It is true,» I said, «that drought often causes us great damage, but because of the very backward state of our agriculture and the great needs we have for bread grain, our peasant has learned to get a bit more from maize than from wheat. Meanwhile we are working to set up a drainage and irrigation system, to drain the marshes and swamps.»

He listened to my answers, asked for more detail and often spoke himself giving very valuable advice. I recall that during those talks, Stalin inquired about the basis on which the Land Reform had been carried out in Albania, about the

percentage of the land distributed to the poor and middle peasants, whether this Reform had affected the religious institutions, etc., etc.

Speaking of the assistance that the state of people's democracy gave the peasantry and the links of the working class with the peasantry. Stalin asked us about tractors, wanted to know whether we had machine and tractor stations in Albania and how we had organized them. After listening to my answer, he began to speak about this question and gave us a whole lot of valuable advice.

«You must set up the machine and tractor stations,» he said among other things, «and strengthen them so that they work the land well, both for the state and the cooperatives and for the individual peasants. The tractor drivers must always be in the service of the peasantry, must know all about agriculture, the crops, the soils and must apply all this knowledge in practice to ensure that production increases without fail. This has great importance,» he continued, «otherwise all-round damage is caused. When we set up the first machine and tractor stations, it often occurred that we tilled the fields of the peasants, but production did not increase. This happened because it is not enough for a tractor driver to know only how to drive his tractor. He must also be a good farmer, must know when and how the land should be worked.

«Tractor drivers,» Stalin continued, «are elements of the working class who work in continuous direct daily contact with the peasantry. Therefore, they must work conscientiously in order to strengthen the alliance between the working class and the labouring peasantry.»

The attention with which he followed my explanations about our new economy and its course of development made a very deep impression on us. Both during the talk about these problems, and in all the other talks with him, one wonderful feature of his, among others, made an indelible impression on my mind: he never gave orders or sought to impose his opinion. He spoke, gave advice, made various proposals, but always added: «This is my opinion», «this is what we think. You. comrades, must judge and decide for yourselves, according to the concrete situation on the basis of your conditions.» His interest extended to every problem.

While I was speaking about the state of our transport and the great difficulties we had to cope with. Stalin asked:

«Do you build small ships in Albania?»

«No,» I said.

«Do you have pine-trees?»

«Yes, we do,» I answered, «whole forests of them.»

«Then you have a good basis,» he said, «for

building simple means of sea transport in the future.»

In the course of our talk he asked me about the situation of railway transport in Albania, what currency we had, what mines we had and whether the Albanian mines had been exploited by the Italians, etc.

I answered the questions Comrade Stalin asked. Concluding the talk, he said:

«At present, the Albanian economy is in a backward state. You comrades, are starting everything from scratch. Therefore, besides your own struggle and efforts, we, too, will help you, to the best of our ability, to restore your economy and strengthen your army. We have studied your requests for aid,» Comrade Stalin told me, «and we have agreed to fulfil all of them. We shall help you to equip your industry and agriculture with the necessary machinery, to strengthen your army and to develop education and culture. The factories and other machinery we shall supply on credits and you will pay for them when you can, while the armaments will be given to you gratis, you'll never have to pay for them. We know that you need even more, but for the time being this is all we can do as we ourselves are still poor, because the war caused us great destruction.

«At the same time,» Comrade Stalin continued. «we shall help you with specialists in order to speed up the process of the development of

the Albanian economy and culture. As for oil, I think we'll send you Azerbaijani specialists, because they are masters of their profession. For its part, Albania should send the sons and daughters of workers and peasants to the Soviet Union, to learn and develop, so that they can help the advancement of their Homeland.»

During the days we stayed in Moscow, after each meeting and talk with Comrade Stalin, we had an even clearer and more intimate view of the real man — the modest, kindly, wise man, in this outstanding revolutionary, in this great Marxist. He loved the Soviet people whole-heartedly. To them, he had dedicated all his strength and energies, his heart and mind worked for them. And in every talk with him. in every activity he carried out, from the most important down to the most ordinary, these qualities distinguished him.

A few days after our arrival in Moscow, together with Comrade Stalin and other leaders of the Party and Soviet state I attended an all-Soviet physical-culture display at the Central Stadium of Moscow. With what keen interest Stalin watched this activity! For over two hours he followed the activities of the participants with rapt attention, and although it began to rain near the end of the display and Molotov entreated him several times to leave the stadium, he continued to watch the

activities attentively to the end, to make jokes, to wave his hand. I remember that a mass race had been organized as the final exercise. The runners made several circuits of the stadium. At the finish, a very tall, thin runner who had lagged behind, appeared before the tribune. He could hardly drag one leg after the other and his arms were flapping aimlessly, nevertheless he was trying to run. He was drenched by the rain. Stalin was watching this runner from a distance with a smile which expressed both pity and fatherly affection.

«Mily moy,»* he said as if talking to himself, «go home, go home, have a little rest, have something to eat and come back again! There will be other races to run...»

Stalin's great respect and affection for our people, his eagerness to learn as much as possible about the history and customs of the Albanian people remain indelible in our memory. At one of the meetings we had those days, during a dinner which Stalin put on for our delegation in the Kremlin, we had a very interesting conversation with him about the origin and language of the Albanian people.

«What is the origin and language of your people?» he asked me, among other things. «Are your people akin to the Basques?» And he continued, «I do not believe that the Albanian people came from the interior of Asia, nor are they of

* my dear (Russ.).

Turkish origin, because the Albanians are of a more ancient stock than the Turks. Perhaps, your people have common roots with those Etruscans who remained in your mountains, because the rest went to Italy, some were assimilated by the Romans and some crossed over to the Iberian Peninsula.»

I replied to Comrade Stalin that the origin of our people was very ancient, that their language was Indo-European. «There are many theories on this question,» I continued, «but the truth is that our origin is Illyrian. We are a people of Illyrian descent. There is also a theory which defends the thesis that the Albanian people are the most ancient people of the Balkans and that the Pelasgians were the ancient pre-Homeric forefathers of the Albanians.»

I went on to explain that the Pelasgian theory was upheld for a time by many scholars, especially German scholars. «There is also an Albanian scholar» I told him, «who is known as an expert on Homer, who has reached the same conclusion, basing himself on some words used in the Iliad and the Odyssey, and which are in use today among the Albanian people, as for example, the word 'gur' (stone) which means 'kamenj' in Russian. Homer uses this word as a prefix to the Greek word, saying 'guri-petra'. Thus, on the basis of a few such words, bearing in mind the Oracle of Dodona, and some documents or etymologies of

words, which have undergone changes, according to many philological interpretations, the scientists conclude that our ancient forefathers were the Pelasgians, who lived on the Balkan Peninsula before the Greeks.

«However, I have not heard that the Albanians are of the same origin as the Basques,» I said to Comrade Stalin. «Such a theory may well exist, like the theory you mentioned, that some of the Etruscans remained in Albania, while the rest branched off to settle in Italy, with some of them crossing over to the Iberian Peninsula, to Spain. It is possible that this theory, too, may have its supporters, but I have no knowledge of it.»

«In the Caucasus we have a place called Albania,» Stalin told me on one occasion. «Could it have any connection with Albania?»

«I don't know,» I said, «but it is a fact that during the centuries, many Albanians, forced by the savage Ottoman occupation, the wars and ferocious persecution of the Ottoman Sultans and Padishahs, were obliged to leave the land of their birth and settle in foreign lands where they have formed whole villages. This is what happened with thousands of Albanians who settled in Southern Italy back in the 15th century, after the death of our National Hero, Scanderbeg, and now there are whole areas inhabited by the Arbëreshi of Italy, who still retain their language and the old customs of the Homeland of their forefathers al-

though they have been living in a foreign land for 4-5 centuries. Likewise,» I told Comrade Stalin, «many Albanians settled in Greece, where entire regions are inhabited by the Arbëreshi of Greece, others settled in Turkey, Rumania, Bulgaria, America and elsewhere... However, as to the place in your country called 'Albania',» I said, «I know nothing concrete.»

Then Stalin asked me about a number of words of our language. He wanted to know the names of some work tools, household utensils, etc. I told him the Albanian words, and after listening to them carefully he repeated them, made comparisons between the Albanian name for the tool and its equivalent in the language of the Albanians of the Caucasus. Now and then he turned to Molotov and Mikoyan and sought their opinion. It turned out that the roots of the words compared had no similarity.

At this moment, Stalin pressed a button, and after a few seconds the general who was Stalin's aide-de-camp, a tall, very attentive man, who behaved towards us with great kindness and sympathy, came in.

«Comrade Enver Hoxha and I are trying to solve a problem, but we cannot,» said Stalin, smiling at the general. «Please get in touch with professor (and he mentioned an outstanding Soviet linguist and historian, whose name has escaped my memory) and ask him on my behalf whether

there is any connection between the Albanians of the Caucasus and those of Albania.»

When the general left, Stalin picked up an orange, and said:

«In Russian this is called 'apyelsin'. What is it in Albanian?»

«Portokall,» I replied.

Again he made the comparison, pronouncing the words of the two languages and shrugged his shoulders. Hardly ten minutes had passed when the general came in again.

«I have the professor's answer,» he announced. «He says there is no evidence at all of any connection between the Albanians of the Caucasus and those of Albania. However, he added that in the Ukraine, in the region of Odessa, there were several villages (about 7) inhabited by Albanians. The professor has precise information about this.»

For my part, I instructed our ambassador in Moscow, there and then, to see to it that some of our students, who were studying history in the Soviet Union should do their practice in these villages and study how and when these Albanians had settled in Odessa, whether they still preserved the language and customs of their forefathers, etc.

Stalin listened very attentively, as always, and said to me:

«Very good, that will be very good. Let your students do their practice there, and moreover, together with some of ours.»

Continuing this free conversation with Comrade Stalin, I said: «In the past the Albanological sciences were not properly developed and those engaged in them were mostly foreign scholars. Apart from other things, this has led to the emergence of all sorts of theories about the origin of our people, language, etc. Nevertheless, they are almost all in agreement on one thing — the fact that the Albanian people and their language are of very ancient origin. However, it will be our own Albanologists, whom our Party and state will train carefully and provide with all the conditions necessary for their work, who will give the precise answer to these problems.»

«Albania must march on its own feet,» Stalin said, «because it has all the possibilities to do so.»

«Without fail we shall forge ahead,» I replied.

«For our part, we shall help the Albanian people whole-heartedly,» said Comrade Stalin in the kindliest tone, «because the Albanians are fine people.»

The whole dinner which Comrade Stalin put on in honour of our delegation passed in a very warm, cordial and intimate atmosphere. Stalin proposed the first toast to our people, to the further progress and prosperity of our country, to the Communist Party of Albania. Then he proposed a toast to me. Hysni[1] and all the

1 Comrade Hysni Kapo, then vice-minister of foreign affairs

members of the Albanian delegation. I recall that later during the dinner, when I spoke to him about the great resistance our people had put up through the centuries against foreign invasions, Comrade Stalin described our people as an heroic people and again proposed a toast to them. Apart from the free chat we had together, from time to time he talked to the others, made jokes and proposed toasts. He did not eat much, but kept his glass of red wine close at hand and clinked it with ours with a smile at every toast.

After the dinner, Comrade Stalin invited us to go to the Kremlin cinema where, apart from some Soviet newsreels, we saw the Soviet feature film «The Tractor Driver». We sat together on a sofa, and I was impressed by the attention with which Stalin followed this new Soviet film. Frequently he would raise his warm voice to comment on various moments of the events treated in the film. He was especially pleased with the way in which the main character in the film, a vanguard tractor driver, in order to win the confidence of his comrades and the farmers, struggled to become well acquainted with the customs and the behaviour of the people in the countryside, their ideas and aspirations. By working and living among the people, this tractor driver succeeded in becoming

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of the PRA, was a member of the delegation which went to Moscow in July 1947.

a leader honoured and respected by the peasants. At this moment Stalin said:

«To be able to lead, you must know the masses, and in order to know them, you must go down among the masses.»

It was past midnight when we rose to leave. At that moment Stalin invited us once again to take our glasses of wine and for the third time proposed a toast to «the heroic Albanian people».

After this he shook hands with us one by one and, when he gave me his hand, said:

«Give my cordial regards to the heroic Albanian people, whom I wish success!»

On July 26, 1947, our delegation, very satisfied with the meetings and talks with Comrade Stalin, set off to return to the Homeland.

SECOND MEETING

March-April 1949

Our stand towards the Yugoslav leadership from the years of the war. The 1st Congress of the CPA. Policy of terror in Kosova. On the Yugoslav divisions which were to be deployed in Albania. The Titoites aimed to overturn the situation in Albania. On the war of the fraternal Greek people. Erroneous views of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. The British want naval bases in our ports as a condition for recognition. The road of the economic and cultural development of Albania. On the situation of our peasantry. On the history, culture, language and customs of the Albanian people.

I went to Moscow again on March 21, 1949, at the head of an official delegation of the Government of the People's Republic of Albania and stayed there until April 11 that year.

Mikoyan, Vyshinsky, etc., as well as all the

diplomatic representatives of the countries of people's democracy had come out to welcome us at the Moscow airport.

We had the first official meeting with Vyshinsky the day after our arrival and on March 23, at 22.05 hours I was received by Comrade Stalin in the Kremlin, in the presence of Vyshinsky and the ambassador of the USSR to Albania, Chuvakhin. I went to this meeting with Spiro Koleka and Mihal Prifti who, at that time, was our ambassador in Moscow.

Comrade Stalin received us very warmly in his office. After shaking hands with each of us in turn, he stopped in front of me:

«You look thin in the face,» he said, «have you been ill? Or are you tired?»

«I feel very glad and happy to meet you again,» I replied and. after we sat down, I told him that I wanted to raise several questions with him.

«Take all the time you need,» he said with great goodwill, so that I would talk about anything I considered necessary.

I gave Comrade Stalin an exposition on a series of problems. I spoke in general about the situation in our Party and country, the recent events, the mistakes recognized, as well as about our stand in connection with the Yugoslav question. I told him that, as a result of the influence of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership on our leader-

ship and the excessive trust of some of our leaders in the treacherous Yugoslav leadership, grave mistakes had been made, especially in the organizational line of the Party, as noted by the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania, the proceedings of which had been held in the light of the Letters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Resolution of the Information Bureau «On the Situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia».

«The Central Committee of our Party,» I told Comrade Stalin, «fully endorsed the Resolution of the Information Bureau and we condemned the treacherous anti-Albanian and anti-Soviet course of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership in a special communique. The leadership of our Party,» I pointed out, «for many years had encountered the hostile conspiratorial activity of the Titoites, the arrogance and intrigues of Tito's envoys — Vukmanovich-Tempo and Dushan Mugosha.» Among other things, I mentioned that on the eve of the liberation of Albania, Tito, seeking to achieve his anti-Albanian and anti-Marxist aims, sent us a delegation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, headed by its special envoy, Velimir Stoynich. At Berat, he and his secret collaborators, the traitors Sejfulla Malëshova, Koçi Xoxe, Pandi Kristo and others, behind

the scenes, prepared their harmful and dangerous moves which constituted a serious plot against the correct line followed by the Party during the whole period of the war, against the independence of the Party and our country, against the General Secretary of the Party personally, etc. Although it knew nothing about the plot that was being concocted. the healthy section of the leadership of our Party there and then energetically opposed the accusations made against it and the line followed during the war. Convinced that grave anti-Marxist mistakes had been made at Berat, among other things, I subsequently presented to our Political Bureau the theses for the re-examination of the Berat Plenum, but. as a result of the feverish subversive activity of the Yugoslav leadership and its agents in our ranks, these theses were not accepted. «The further development of events, the Letters of the Central Committee of your Party as well as the Resolution of the Information Bureau,» I told Comrade Stalin. «made the situation completely clear to us, the hostile activity of the Yugoslav leadership with Tito at the head was uncovered and proved and the plotters in the ranks of our Party were thoroughly exposed at the 11th Plenum of the CC of the Party. The 1st Congress of the CPA endorsed the turn taken by the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee and made it more thorough-going. It appraised the political line followed by the Party since its founding as correct, and

found that the peculiar distortions which became apparent after Liberation, especially in the organizational line of the Party, were the result of the Yugoslav interference and the treacherous Trotskyite activity of Koçi Xoxe, Pandi Kristo and Kristo Themelko.»

I mentioned that both Koçi Xoxe and Pandi Kristo were dangerous agents of the Yugoslav Trotskyites in the ranks of the leadership of our Party, that with the guidance, support and backing of the Yugoslav Titoites they had made every effort to usurp the key positions in our Party and our state of people's democracy. In all their treacherous activity they had put themselves in the service of the national-chauvinist and colonialist policy of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership towards the People's Republic of Albania. I added that Kristo Themelko was one of those most influenced by the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership and had implemented its directives in the sector of the army unreservedly. «However,» I went on, «after the betrayal of the Yugoslav leadership was fully uncovered, he admitted his mistakes and made self-criticism before the Party.»

Stalin, who was listening attentively, asked:

«What are these three? Are they Slavs. Albanians or what are they?»

«Kristo Themelko,» I said, «is of Macedonian origin, whereas Koçi Xoxe is of Albanian origin, although his parents lived in Macedonia.»

I went on to tell him about the exceptionally great importance which the Letters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union addressed to the Yugoslav leadership and the Resolution of the Information Bureau had for our Party. «In the light of these documents, which came out at very crucial moments for our Party and people,» I told Comrade Stalin, «the character and the aims of Yugoslav interference in Albania became completely clear to the Central Committee of our Party.» After giving a general outline of the many radical measures our Party had taken to put an end to the ferocious anti-Marxist and anti-Albanian activity of these agents, I told him that, although we encountered and opposed their crooked activities as early as the war-years, still we were conscious of our responsibility, because we should have proved more vigilant.

Here Comrade Stalin interrupted me with these words:

«Our letters addressed to the Yugoslav leadership do not contain everything, because there are many matters that emerged later. We did not know that the Yugoslavs, under the pretext of 'defending' your country against an attack from the Greek fascists, wanted to bring units of their army into the PRA. They tried to do this in a very secret manner. In reality, their aim in this direction was utterly hostile, for they intended to overturn the

situation in Albania. Your report to us on this question was of value, otherwise we would have known nothing about these divisions which they wanted to station on your territory. They implied that they were taking this action allegedly with the approval of the Soviet Union! As for what you said, that you ought to have shown greater vigilance, the truth is that in the relations with Yugoslavia there has been lack of vigilance not only by you but also by others.»

Continuing my discourse, I told Comrade Stalin that the difficult moments created by the Titoites and by the monarcho-fascists who were acting against our country under orders of the American and British imperialists, were overcome successfully thanks to the correct line of the Party, the patriotism of our people and the assistance of the CP of the Soviet Union. This was a major test from which we learned a great deal to correct our mistakes, to consolidate the victories achieved up till now, and to fight to strengthen and develop them further. Our army accomplished its tasks with courage and lofty patriotism.

During the difficult period we went through, the patriotism of the masses was very great. Their trust in our Party, in its correct line and in the Soviet Union was unshakeable. The activity of the internal enemy was short-lived. I told Comrade Stalin that we had neutralized the hostile activity

of those who had put themselves in the service of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership. We adopted differentiated stands towards those who, in one way or another, were implicated in the anti-Albanian activity of the Trotskyite Yugoslav leadership. Some of them made self-criticism over the mistakes they had committed in good faith, while those who were gravely compromised were already rendering account before the people's court.

«Protect your Homeland and the Party,» Comrade Stalin said. «The enemy must be exposed thoroughly, with convincing arguments, so that the people can see what this enemy has done and be convinced of the menace he represents. Even if such an enemy, utterly discredited in the eyes of the people, is not shot, he is automatically shot, morally and politically, because without the people he can do nothing at all.»

«The trial which is now going on in Tirana,» I told Comrade Stalin, «is being held with open doors and everything that is said in the court room is published in the newspapers.

«At the same time.» I added, «those who have thoroughly understood their mistakes, who have made sincere and convincing self-criticism, we have treated patiently and magnanimously, and have given them the possibility to make amends for their mistakes and faults through work, through loyalty to the Party and the people. We

have even thought we should send one of them to study in the Soviet Union,» and I mentioned one name.

«Really?» Stalin asked me and looked me right in the eye. «Have you requested that this person should come here to study? Do you still have political trust in him?»

«We do,» I said, «his self-criticism has become more and more profound and we hope that he will correct himself.»

«But does he want to come here?»

«He has expressed the wish to come,» I said.

At this point Chuvakhin added some explanations in support of my opinion.

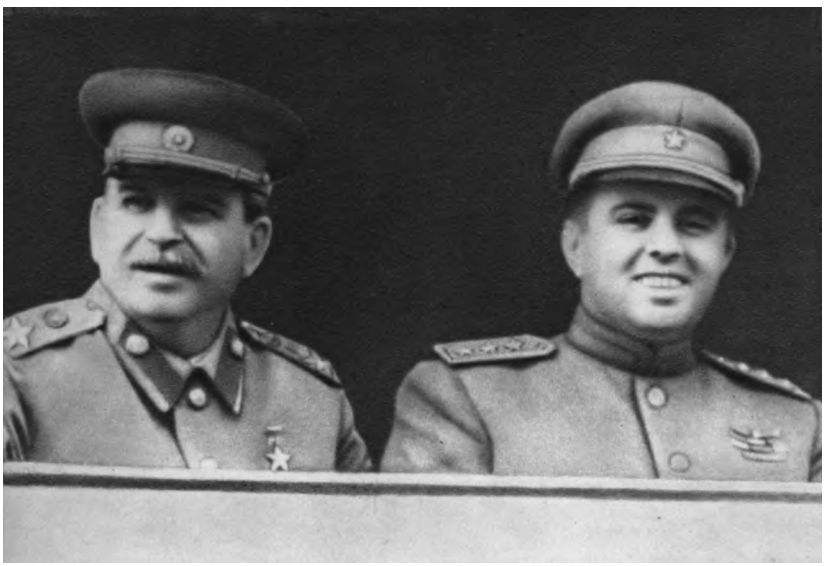
«Well, then, since you have weighed this matter well, Comrade Enver, let him come...»

Continuing the conversation, I told Comrade Stalin that during the same period the Americans, from Italy had parachuted groups of saboteurs into the south and north of Albania. We killed some of these saboteurs and captured the remainder. Foreseeing the difficulties on our southern border and wanting to have the forces available for any eventuality, we first had to undertake a mopping-up operation in North Albania against the groups of political and common bandits who operated within our borders under the direction of agents sent in by Rankovich, and we did this. These bands in the service of the Yugoslavs carried out a number of assassinations. Our mopping-

up operation ended successfully: we wiped out some of them and all the others crossed over into Yugoslav territory, where they remain to this day.

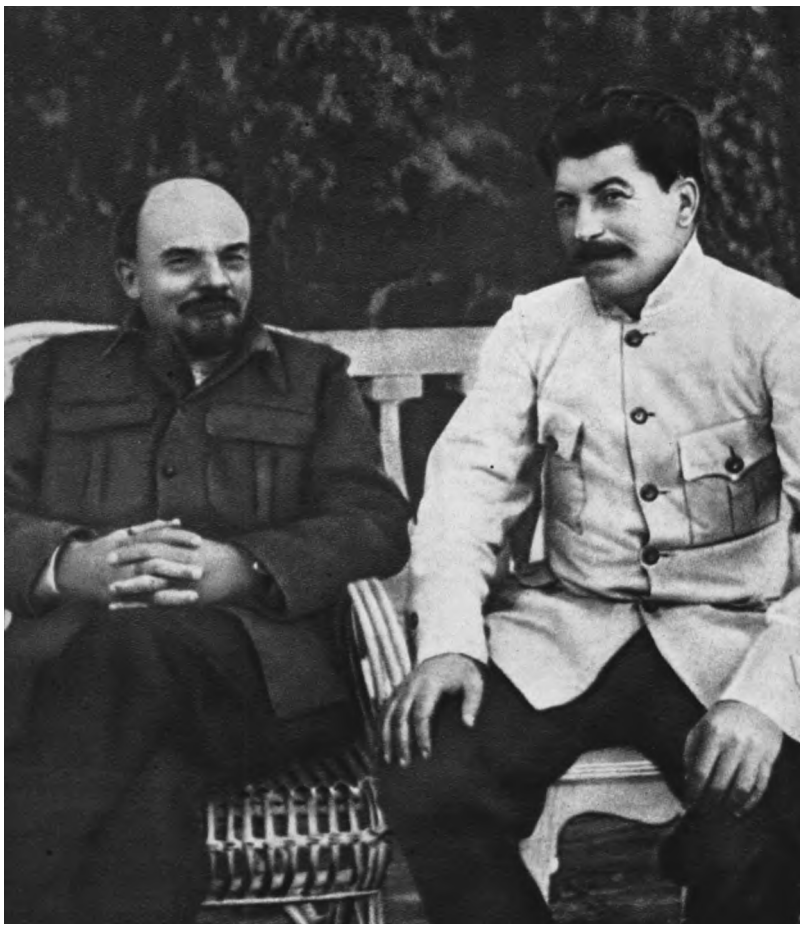
«Do they continue to send in other saboteurs?» Stalin asked.

«We think that they have not given up. The policy of Tito and Rankovich to lure Albanians into their territories in order to organize groups of saboteurs and wreckers with them, met defeat, and at present there are very few defections. Our government has taken economic measures and the political and organizational work of the Party has been strengthened. The imperialists are training groups of wreckers abroad, just as the monarcho-fascists and the Titoites are doing on their part. The Italians are not lagging behind. Our present plan is to rout the remnants of the bandits at large in our mountains for whom we have already made things very difficult, and to destroy their bases, which are among the kulaks, especially. Most of the reactionary groupings in the cities have been smashed by the State Security Forces which have scored many successes. Our Party put things in order in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a former centre of the Titoites, and the State Security has become a very powerful and much beloved weapon of the Party and our people. General Mehmet Shehu is a glorious leader and he enjoys the continuous aid of the Party and the people in his difficult and delicate task. The Party has set itself



J. V. Stalin and Comrade Enver Hoxha at the Central Stadium. Moscow, July 1947.

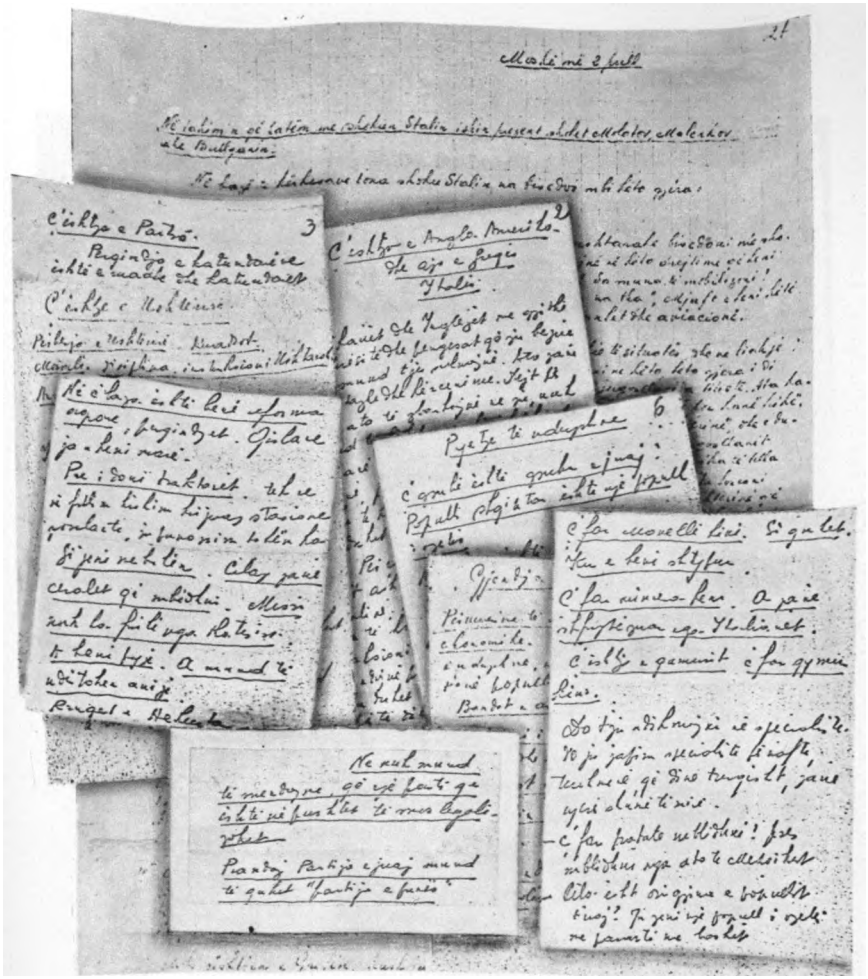
At the Central Stadium, Moscow, July 1947.



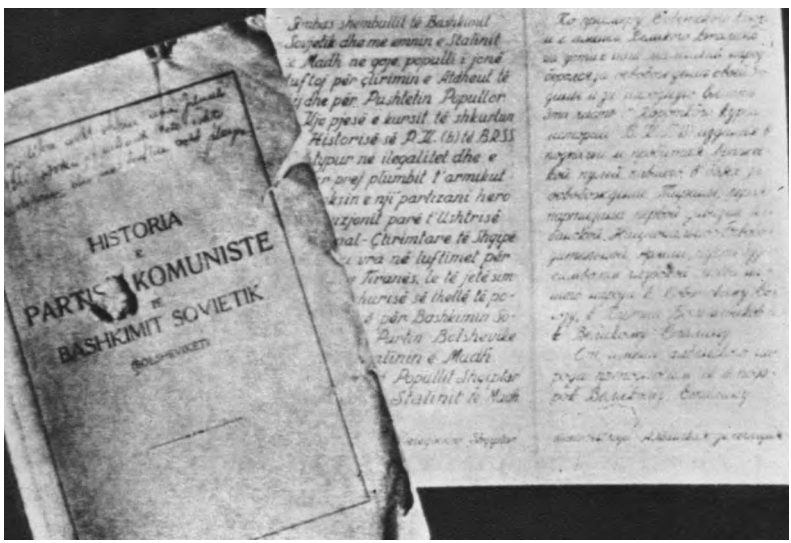
V. I. Lenin and J. V. Stalin at Gorky. 1922.

A wreath of multi-coloured flowers at the entrance to the Mausoleum of the immortal Lenin. Moscow March 1949.

At the Central Museum of V. I. Lenin. Moscow, March 1949.



Facsimile of Comrade Enver Hoxha's notes kept during his meetings with Joseph Stalin.



This book pierced by a fascist bullet in the bosom of a partisan of our National Liberation Army was presented to J. V. Stalin in 1947.

the task of strengthening its positions more and more each day in order to cope with and smash all the attempts and attacks our many enemies may make.

«The Party is growing stronger from day to day,» I went on to tell Comrade Stalin. «In the ranks of our young Party there is great courage and great will. The ideological and cultural level of our party workers is low, but there is great eagerness to learn. We are working in this direction to improve the situation. We still have many shortcomings in the work of our Party, but with persistent efforts, with confidence in the future and with the experience of the Bolshevik Party, we shall eliminate these shortcomings.»

In continuation of the talk, I gave Comrade Stalin a general outline of the economic situation in Albania, the results achieved and the big struggle the Party and the people had waged and were waging to cope with the difficulties created in the economy by the hostile work of the Yugoslav Trotskyites and their agents. I told him that our people were unpretentious and hard-working, and they had mobilized themselves under the leadership of the Party to overcome the backwardness and the difficulties created and to carry out the tasks set by the 1st Congress of the Party.

I told him that the 1st Congress of the Party, along with the socialist industrialization, had

laid down the guidelines for the strengthening of the socialist sector in agriculture by increasing the state farms and stepping up the gradual collectivization in the form of agricultural cooperatives, which the state would support politically, economically and organizationally.

«Have you set up many such cooperatives? What criteria do you follow?» Comrade Stalin asked.

Here I explained to him that the Congress had given the orientation that the collectivization of agriculture should be carried out gradually, patiently and on a voluntary basis. On this road we would neither rush things nor mark time.

«In my opinion,» said Comrade Stalin, «you must not rush things in the collectivization of agriculture. Yours is a mountainous country with a relief that differs from one region to another. In our country, too, in mountain areas similar to those of your country, the kolkhozes were set up much later.»

Then I went on to speak about the work that was being done in our country to strengthen the alliance of the working class with the working peasantry, about the assistance the state gave the individual peasant, the increase of agricultural production and the policy of procurement of agricultural and livestock products.

«This has very great importance,» Comrade Stalin said, «and you are right to devote attention

to it. If the Albanian peasants need tractors, other farm machines, draft animals, seeds or anything else, you must help them. Moreover,» he continued, «you must also dig canals for the peasantry, then you will see what it will be able to do. In my opinion, it is better that the peasant pays his obligations to the state for the above aid in kind.»

«The state must set up machine and tractor stations,» continued Comrade Stalin, «you should not give the tractors to the cooperatives, but the state should help the individual peasants plough their land, too, if they seek this help. Thus, little by little, the poor peasant will begin to feel the need for the collectivization.

«As for surpluses of agricultural products,» Comrade Stalin went on, «these the peasants must dispose of as they like, for, if you act otherwise, the peasants will not collaborate with the government. If the peasantry does not see the aid of the state concretely, it will not assist the state.

«I do not know the history and characteristics of the bourgeoisie of your country,» said Comrade Stalin and then asked: «Have you had a merchant bourgeoisie?»

«We have had a merchant bourgeoisie in the process of formation,» I said, «but now it has no power».

«Have you expropriated it entirely?» he asked me.

In answering this question, I told Comrade Stalin about the policy the Party had followed as early as the war years in regard to the well-to-do classes, about the great differentiation which had taken place as a result of the stand of the elements of these classes towards the foreign invaders, about the fact that most of them had become collaborators with fascism and, after staining their hands with the blood of the people, had either fled together with the invaders or, those who did not manage to get away, had been captured by the people and handed over to the court. «In regard to those elements, mainly of the patriotic middle and petty bourgeoisie, who were linked with the people during the war and opposed the foreign invaders,» I went on, «the Party supported them, kept close to them and showed them the true road to serve the development of the country and the strengthening of the independence of the Homeland. As a result of the hostile activity of Koçi Xoxe and company, unjust stands and harsh measures were taken in the recent years towards some of these elements, as well as towards some patriotic intellectuals,» I told Comrade Stalin, «but the Party has now forcefully denounced these errors and will not allow them to occur again.»

Comrade Stalin said that on this, as on any other problem, everything depended on the concrete conditions and situations of each country. «But I think,» he stressed, «that in the first phase

of the revolution, the policy followed towards the patriotic bourgeoisie which truly wants the independence of its country should be such as to enable it to help in this phase with the means and assets it possesses.

«Lenin teaches us,» he continued, «that in the first period of the revolution, where this revolution has an anti-imperialist character, the communists can use the assistance of the patriotic bourgeoisie. Of course, this depends on the concrete conditions, on the stand of this bourgeoisie towards the most acute problems the country is faced with, etc.

«In the countries of people's democracy, for example, the big bourgeoisie had compromised itself with the German invaders and had assisted them. When the Soviet army liberated these countries, the sold-out bourgeoisie took the road of exile.»

He thought for a moment and added:

«It seems to me the Soviet army did not come to help in Albania. But did the Yugoslav army come to help your country during the National Liberation War?»

«No,» I replied. «Our National Liberation Army, with two partisan divisions, went and fought in Yugoslav territory to assist in the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia».

Continuing his theme, Comrade Stalin emphasized that every communist party and socialist

state should be particularly careful also in their relations with the intellectuals. A great deal of careful far-sighted work must be done with them with the aim of bringing the honest, patriotic intellectuals as close as possible to the people's power.

Mentioning some specific features of the Russian revolution, Comrade Stalin stressed that at that time, Russia had not been under the yoke of any foreign imperialist power, hence they had risen only against the exploiters within the country, and the Russian national bourgeoisie, as the exploiter it was, had not reconciled itself to the revolution. A fierce struggle had been waged for several years in that country and the Russian bourgeoisie had sought the aid and intervention of the imperialists.

«Hence, there is a clear difference between the Russian revolution and the struggle that is going on in those countries which have fallen victims to imperialist aggressors.

«I mention this,» Stalin continued, «to show how important it is to bear in mind the concrete conditions of each country, because the conditions of one country are not always identical with those of other countries. That is why no one should copy our experience or that of others, but should only study it and profit from it by applying it according to the concrete conditions of his own country.»

Time had slipped away unnoticed during this meeting with Stalin. I took up the thread of my discourse again and began to expound the problems of the plan for strengthening the defences and developing the economy and culture in the PRA.

«The chief of your General Staff,» Comrade Stalin told me, «has sent us some requests for your army. We ordered that all of them should be met. Have you received what you wanted?»

«We have not yet received any information about this,» I said.

At this moment Stalin called in a general and charged him with gathering precise information about this question. After a few minutes the telephone rang. Stalin took up the receiver and, after listening to what was said, informed me that the materiel was en route.

«Did you get the rails?» he asked. «Is the railway completed?»

«We got them,» I told him, «and we have inaugurated the railway,» and continued to outline the main tasks of the plan for the economic and cultural development of the country and the strengthening of its defences. On this occasion I also presented our requests for aid from the Soviet Union.

Just as previously, Comrade Stalin received our requests sympathetically and said to us quite openly:

«Comrades, we are a big country, but you know that we have not yet eliminated all the grave consequences of the war. However, we shall help you today and in the future, perhaps not all that much, but with those possibilities we have. We understand that you have to set up and develop the sector of socialist industry, and in this direction we agree to fulfil all the requests you have presented to us, as well as those for agriculture.»

Then, smiling, he added:

«But will the Albanians them selves work?»

I understood why he asked me this question. It was the result of the evil-intended information of the Armenian huckster, Mikoyan, who, at a meeting I had with him, not only spoke to me in a language quite unlike that of Stalin, but also used harsh terms in his criticisms about the realization of plans in our country, alleging that our people did not work, etc. His intention was to reduce the rate and amount of aid. This was always Mikoyan's stand. But Stalin accorded us everything we sought.

«We shall also send you the cadres you asked for,» he said, «and they will spare no effort to help you but, of course, they will not stay in Albania forever. Therefore, comrades, you must train your own cadres, your own specialists, to replace ours. This is an important matter. However many foreign cadres come to your country,

you will still need your own cadres. Therefore, comrades,» he advised us, «you must open your university, which will be a great centre for training your future cadres».

«We have opened the first institutes,» I told Comrade Stalin, «and work is going ahead in them, but we are still only at the beginning. Apart from experience and textbooks, we also lack the cadres necessary for opening the university.»

«The important thing is to get started,» he said. «Then step by step, everything will be achieved. For our part, we shall assist you both with literature and with specialists, in order to help increase the number of higher institutes which are the basis for the creation of the university in the future.»

«The Soviet specialists,» Comrade Stalin went on, «will be paid by the Albanian government the same salaries as the Albanian specialists. Don't grant them any favour more than your specialists enjoy.»

«The Soviet specialists come from far away», I replied, «and we cannot treat them the same as ours.»

Comrade Stalin objected at once:

«No, no, whether they come from Azerbaijan or any other part of the Soviet Union, we have our rules for the treatment of the specialists we send to the assistance of the fraternal peoples. It is their duty to work with all their

strength as internationalist revolutionaries, to work for the good of Albania just as for the good of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government undertakes to make up the necessary difference in their salaries».

After I thanked Comrade Stalin, I raised the question of the teams that were needed for geological and hydro-electric studies, for the construction of railways and a series of problems of the future of our industrial development. After giving a positive answer to the matters I raised, he asked me a series of questions: «Do you have many large rivers for the construction of hydropower stations? Is there much coal in Albania?» etc.

I answered Comrade Stalin and then asked whether we could send a number of cadres to the Soviet Union to be trained as specialists for some essential urgent needs of the country. «If this is impossible,» I said «then let some specialists be sent from the Soviet Union to Albania to train our cadres on the spot.»

Comrade Stalin said:

«In this direction we would rather send some instructors to Albania, because were your men to come to the Soviet Union a longer time will be needed for their training, as they will have to learn Russian,» etc.

Comrade Stalin recommended that we address this request to the Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union and added:

«Comrade Vyshinsky has been charged with conducting all the talks from our side, therefore you must address any request to him.»

I told Comrade Stalin that, in general, those were the questions that I wanted to discuss with him in regard to the internal situation in Albania and expressed the desire to give a brief outline of the political position of Albania in regard to the international situation. He looked at his watch and asked:

«Would twenty minutes be enough?»

«A little longer, if possible, Comrade Stalin,» I replied.

After speaking about the tense situation in our relations with Yugoslavia, and the hostile activity of the Yugoslav traitors, the bands of criminals they had organized and smuggled into Albanian territory to carry out disruption and sabotage against our country, I spoke to Comrade Stalin about the policy of savage terror followed by the Tito clique against the Albanians of Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro.

«Are there many Albanians in Yugoslavia?» Stalin asked me. «And what religion do they profess?»

«There are more than a million of them,» I said (here Vyshinsky expressed his astonishment

at such a large number which, it seemed, he had never heard of before), and continued: «Almost all of them are Moslems.»

«How is it possible that they have not been assimilated by the Slavs? What links do the Albanians living in Yugoslavia maintain with those in Albania?» asked Stalin again.

«At all periods, the Albanians living in Yugoslavia have been outstanding for their ardent patriotism and their strong links with their Homeland and their compatriots,» I told Comrade Stalin in reply to his question. «They have always forcibly opposed the feverish expansionist efforts of the great-Serbian and great-Slav reactionary chauvinists and their attempts to assimilate them and have preserved their Albanian national identity in every respect, with fanaticism.

«At present the Tito clique is following the same line and the same methods in Kosova and the Albanian-inhabited territories of Montenegro and Macedonia, as those used by their counterparts — King Alexander and others in the past. Kosova is a very weak spot for the Belgrade clique, hence it is using large-scale terror there, with mass deportations, arrests and forced labour, conscription to the army as well as expropriation of a large number of people. The Albanian element is particularly persecuted in Titoite Yugoslavia, because the present Yugoslav leaders are well aware of the patriotic and revolutionary qualities

of the Albanian population there, well aware that for this population the national problem has been and still is an open wound which needs to be healed. Apart from this, the Titoites have turned Kosova and the other Yugoslav regions inhabited by the Albanians into important centres for assembling Albanian quislings, bandits and spies who, instructed by the men of the UDB, prepare acts of terrorism, subversion, sabotage and armed attacks against our country. The Belgrade clique has set in motion former Serbian, British and American agents, as well as Italian and German agents, in order to mobilize the Albanian reaction of Kosova and, from this reaction, to organize detachments which, together with the other Albanian bandits, enter our territory and cause disturbances.»

Then I went on to give Comrade Stalin a brief account of the Greek people's war against the monarcho-fascists and the Anglo-Americans, about the political support we gave this just war of the fraternal Greek people and, among other things, pointed out that the Greek Democratic Army stood aloof from the people.

Comrade Stalin was astonished when he heard these words and asked:

«What, what did you say?!»

I gave him complete explanations, both about this problem and about the mistaken views of Nicos Zachariades and company on the role of

the party and the commissar in the army, in the government, etc.

«We think,» I told Comrade Stalin among other things, «that the leadership of the Greek Communist Party made grave mistakes in regard to the strengthening and expansion of the party in the countryside and the town during the war against the Hitlerites, and that these errors manifested themselves again during the war against internal reaction and Anglo-American intervention.

«Mistakenly believing that the city would play the decisive role in the victory over the Hitlerites and internal reaction, in the years of the anti-fascist war the Siantos[1] leadership ordered the Greek proletariat to stay in the cities. This brought about that the more revolutionary part of the Greek people remained exposed to the savage blows of the internal Hitlerites, while the Greek National Liberation Partisan Army was deprived of the proletariat, which should have been the motor and the leadership of the Greek people's revolution.» Then I pointed out that despite the savage terror and the heavy blows the Hitlerites and internal reaction had struck at the proletariat and the revolutionary elements in the cities, the latter, in general, still remained in the cities, where

1 Former general secretary of the Greek Communist Party, an opportunist and capitulator to Anglo-American reaction.

they were killed, tortured, arrested and interned on islands, and had not taken to the mountains en masse, because such had been the directive of the Greek Communist Party. «Of course, even then there were important fighting actions, such as sabotage, executions of enemies, etc., carried out in the cities, but these actions were of second-rate importance in the general context of the fight of the Greek people.

«The same weaknesses,» I stressed further, «were observed in the countryside, too, where the extension of the party was limited, and its organization weak and lax, with the organizations of the party frequently confounded with those of EAM. There was opportunism both in the organization and in the political line of the national liberation councils at the village level, there was duality of power and coexistence with the Zervist reactionary organizations, etc., in the liberated areas and elsewhere. We told the Greek comrades that their putting the Command of the National Liberation Army under the orders of the Mediterranean Command, their talks and agreements of an opportunist and capitulationist character with Zervas and the reactionary Greek government in exile, the predominance of peasant elements and of the old career officers in the leadership of the Greek National Liberation Army, and so on, were grave errors which would lead the heroic struggle of the Greek people to defeat. The

Varkiza agreement was the logical conclusion to all these wrong actions and views — it brought about the capitulation to British and local reaction.

«However, we think that even after the capitulationist Varkiza agreement and the period of 'legality' of the Greek Communist Party, the leadership of the Greek Communist Party did not go deeply enough into its former mistakes in order to correct them in a radical manner,» I told Comrade Stalin. «The strengthening of the party in the city and the countryside, sound links with the broad masses of the people should have been the prime concern of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party, for it was in this that it made some of its gravest errors in the past. It did not do this, because it did not have a correct appreciation of the new situation created after the defeat of fascism, underrated the internal enemy and Anglo-American reaction and was unable to foresee the great danger that would threaten it from these forces of reaction, as it should have done. It had great hopes in 'legal' activity and parliamentarianism. As a result, the party was disarmed before the enemy, lost its sound ties with the people, the people's revolution in Greece went through a grave crisis, and the people were given the impression that the revolution would triumph on the parliamentary road and through elections, and when reaction struck, the people were confus-

ed, taken by surprise, and in despair. The Greek people fought heroically against the Hitlerites to win their freedom, but the victory slipped from their hands because of the mistakes of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. All these mistakes had grave consequences in the subsequent development of events, when any illusion about victory on the legal road was over, and the party had to go underground and decided to resume the war.

«It is a fact,» I told Comrade Stalin, «that before it went underground the party managed to regroup part of the partisan forces, sent them to the mountains and recommenced the war. This was a very good thing. But we think that precisely at this point, the mistaken views of the comrades of the Greek leadership on the strategy and tactics they had to employ, the organization of the party in the city and the countryside, the organization of the party in the army, and in the first place, the links with the masses and the leading role of the party, crop up again.

«The comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party underestimated the strength of the enemy and thought that they would easily seize power, that they would easily liberate Greece from the Anglo-Americans and the monarcho-fascists. The result of this mistaken view was that they failed to prepare themselves for a protracted, difficult war, underrated the partisan war and described the partisan forces they succeeded in

regrouping as a 'regular army'. They pinned all their hopes of victory on this 'regular army', in this way neglecting the main factor — the people, and the Marxist-Leninist principle that 'the army and the people are one'. The comrades of the Greek leadership did not make a correct appraisal of the moments Greece was passing through. As a result of the defeat, the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses had been dampened, hence this revolutionary enthusiasm had to be revived by reorganizing the party and making it strong both in the city and in the countryside, while radically correcting the old errors, and extending the partisan war over the whole of the country.

«Monarcho-fascism was terrified of two things: its great enemy — the people, and the partisan war,» I went on with the exposition of my idea. «Both these factors were underrated by the leadership of the Greek Communist Party, and the enemy was able to profit from this mistake. The enemy was afraid of a partisan war, which would be extended from day to day, would gradually draw in the masses of the people of city and countryside and would assume ever larger proportions up to the general armed uprising and the seizure of power. The enemy was spared this because of the wrong tactic of the Greek leadership which thought and still thinks that it should always station its main forces facing the enemy in a frontal war and a passive defence. That was

precisely what the enemy wanted—to nail down the main forces of the Greek Democratic Army at a few points and to smash and annihilate them there by means of its superiority in men and armaments.

«Taking advantage of this grave error of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party, the monarcho-fascists deprived the Greek Democratic Army of the support of the people, parted the Greek Communist Party from its mother base. With terror and killings, monarcho-fascism drove the population from all the areas where the major and the more active part of the Greek Democratic Army was stationed, not for attack, but to defend itself. We consider this a fatal mistake. In our country, too,» I told Comrade Stalin, «during the National Liberation War, fascism killed and massacred the population, and put entire regions to the torch, however the people did not go into camps behind barbed wire, but took to the mountains, fought and returned to their ruined homes and there put up resolute resistance, because the Party had told them to fight and resist. Our National Liberation Army was never apart from the people, because our Party itself had its sound bases among the people. We think that the enemy succeeded in isolating the Greek partisans among the barren mountains, because the Greek Communist Party did not have sound bases among

the people. That is why I said that the leadership of the Greek Communist Party deprived itself and the Democratic Army of its mother base — the people.»

In conclusion, I mentioned to Comrade Stalin the threats the external enemies were making towards Albania.

He listened to me attentively and, on the problems I had raised, expressed the opinion:

«As for the Greek people's war,» he said among other things, «we, too, have always considered it a just war, have supported and backed it whole-heartedly. Any people's war is not waged by the communists alone, but by the people, and the important thing is that the communists should lead it. Things are not going well for Tsaldaris and he is trying to save himself by means of the Anglo-Americans.

«As for the screams of the external enemies about partitioning Albania,» he went on, «they are just to intimidate you, because I do not think there is any danger in this direction at present. This comes about not from the 'goodwill' of the enemies, but for a whole series of reasons. In the first place, Albania is a free and independent country, the people have seized power there and they will know how to defend their independence, just as they knew how to win it. Second, the external enemies themselves have contradictions with one another over Albania.

None of them wants Albania to belong only to the one or the other. If Greece wants to have Albania for itself, this would not be advantageous to Italy or Yugoslavia, which would raise obstacles to this, and so on in turn. On the other hand,» Comrade Stalin pointed out, «the independence of Albania has been recognized and confirmed by the declaration of the big three — the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States of America. This declaration may be violated, but that is not so easy to do. Hence, come what may, Albania has its independence protected.»

Comrade Stalin repeated several times that if the Albanian Government pursued a cautious, intelligent, and far-sighted policy, then its affairs would go well.

Continuing, Comrade Stalin advised me:

«You must consider the possibilities of establishing relations with Italy, because it is your neighbour, but first you should take measures to protect yourselves against the activity of the Italian fascists.»

Speaking of the importance of the recognition of our country in the international arena, he asked:

«Which other state is knocking at your door in order to establish diplomatic relations with you? How are your relations with the French?»

«With the French,» I explained, «we have diplomatic relations. They have their representatives in Tirana and we have ours in Paris.»

«And what about with the United States of America and Britain?»

«We have no diplomatic relations with them,» I replied. «The United States of America, in 1945, made the establishment of relations with us conditional on our recognition of the validity of all the agreements it had signed with the anti-popular government of Zog. We cannot accept these agreements as lawful, because they have an enslaving character, and because the Congress of Përmet has explicitly prohibited this. For their part.» I went on, «the British want naval bases in our ports, and only then will they recognize us. They have long been trying to realize these aims.

«At the time when we had wiped out the nazi forces and liberated almost the entire country, the British, through some military missions they had in our country and under the guise of allies in the anti-fascist war, insistently demanded that as 'allies', we, together with one of their commandos, should wipe out a German garrison that remained in Saranda, our southernmost port. We accepted their request on condition that, once the operation was over, they should return immediately to where they had come from, to the sea. The operation was completed and the British not only wanted to stay there, but also intended to penetrate into the interior of the country.

«The General Staff of the National Liberation Army presented them with an ultimatum, which

demanded their immediate withdrawal, otherwise we would fight and drive them into the sea. After our ultimatum the British boarded their ships and returned to Greece. But they have not given up their aims.»

«You must see what is best in the interests of your country,» Comrade Stalin said, and he added:

«As for the bases the British want to have in your ports, in no way should you agree to this. Guard your ports well.»

«We will never relinquish them to anybody!» I said. «If the worst comes to the worst we shall die rather than relinquish them.»

«You must guard them and not die,»said Comrade Stalin, laughing. «Here diplomacy is needed.»

Then he rose, shook hands with each of us in turn and went away.

We met again some days later at a dinner which was put on in the Kremlin in honour of our delegation. Comrade Stalin, I and the others were seated round the table. At this dinner, just as in all other meetings we had with him, we were impressed and moved by Stalin's great love for our country and people, his interest to learn as much as possible about the history, culture, language and customs of our people.

He started the conversation by asking me about some words of the Albanian language:

«I want to hear,» he told me, «how the words: **people, man, bread, gift, wife, husband and land,** sound in Albanian.»

I began pronouncing these Albanian words and he listened to me with great concentration. I remember that a funny situation arose over one of these words. He had asked me what was the Albanian equivalent of the Russian word «dar».*

«Peshqesh!» I was quick to reply.

«No, no!» he said, «Peshqesh is not Albanian, but Turkish.» And he laughed. He had a very frank and sincere laugh, a laugh which came straight from the heart.

Listening to my pronunciation of Albanian words, Comrade Stalin said:

«Your language is very old and has been handed down in spoken form from one generation to the other. This, too, is a fact which proves the endurance of your people, the great strength of their resistance to assimilation despite the storms that have swept over them.»

In connection with these problems, he asked me:

«What is the national composition of the Albanian people? Are there Serbian or Croatian national minorities in Albania?»

* gift (Russ.).

«The overwhelming majority of our people,» I told him, «is made up of Albanians, but there is a Greek national minority (about 28,000 people) and a very few Macedonians (five small villages all told), while there are no Serbs or Croats.»

«How many religious beliefs are there in Albania,» Comrade Stalin inquired, «and what language is spoken?»

«In Albania,» I replied, «there are three religions: Moslem, Orthodox, and Catholic. The population which professes these three faiths is of the same nationality — Albanian, therefore the only language used is Albanian, with the exception of the Greek national minority which speak their mother tongue.»

From time to time, while I was speaking, Stalin took out his pipe and filled it with tobacco. I noticed that he did not use any special tobacco, but took «Kazbek» cigarettes, tore them open, discarded the paper and filled his pipe with the tobacco. After listening to my answer, he said:

«You are a separate people, just like the Persians and the Arabs, who have the same religion as the Turks. Your ancestors existed before the Romans and the Turks. Religion has nothing to do with nationality and statehood.»

And in the course of our conversation, he asked me:

«Do you eat pork, Comrade Enver?»

«Yes, I do!» I said.

«The Moslem religion prohibits this among its believers,» he said, «this is an old, outdated custom. Nevertheless,» he went on, «the question of religious beliefs must be kept well in mind, must be handled with great care, because the religious feelings of the people must not be offended. These feelings have been cultivated in the people for many centuries, and great patience is called for on this question, because the stand towards it is important for the compactness and unity of the people.»

The dinner passed in a very warm and comradely atmosphere. After proposing a toast to the Albanian army and the Soviet army, Comrade Stalin again mentioned the question of the struggle of the Greek people. He spoke with deep sympathy about the brave and freedom-loving Greek people, about their heroism, their sacrifices and the blood they had shed in their just war.

«Both we and you, all the revolutionaries and peoples are with the just struggle of the Greek people, with their demands for freedom and democracy. They will never lack our ideological and political support and backing,» said Comrade Stalin among other things. «You,» he went on, «who border on Greece, must be particularly careful and vigilant in order to cope with any provocation of the monarcho-fascists against your country.»

In the course of the dinner toasts were drunk

to all the comrades in turn. A toast was drunk to Omer Nishani[1], too.

Raising his glass time and again, Molotov urged me to drink more and, when he saw that I was not fulfilling his desire, asked:

«Why so little?! Last night you drank more!»

«Ah, last night! Last night was another matter,» I said, laughing.

Then Molotov turned to Comrade Stalin:

«Last night,» he said, «I dined with Comrade Enver at Vyshinsky's. The news reached us that yesterday, March 31, a son was born to Enver Hoxha in Tirana. In our rejoicing, we drank a bit more.»

«Congratulations!» said Stalin immediately, raising his glass to me: «Let us drink this to the health of your little son and your wife!»

I thanked Comrade Stalin wishing him good health and a long life for the good of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet State, for the good of the revolution and Marxism-Leninism.

Several hours passed in this warm and friendly homely atmosphere. Both my comrades and I retain indelible memories of the behaviour and features of the glorious Stalin, of that man whose name and work struck terror into the hearts

1 At that time president of the Presidium of the People's Assembly of the PRA.

of the enemies — imperialists, fascists, Trotskyites, and reactionaries of every hue, while they aroused joy and enthusiasm in the hearts of the communists, proletarians and peoples, and gave them added strength and confidence in the future.

All through the dinner he was in the best of spirits, happy, laughing, extremely attentive in the conversation between us, and trying to make all present feel completely at ease. At about 23 hours Stalin suggested:

«What about some coffee?»

We all rose and went to the adjacent room. While coffee was being served, at a table nearby two Soviet comrades were laughing and trying to persuade Xhafer Spahiu to drink a bit more. Xhafer was resisting and said something to them. This scene did not escape the ever attentive Stalin who said jokingly to the Soviet comrades:

«Oh, this is not fair! You are not on an equal footing with the guest — you are two to one!»

We all laughed and continued talking and joking just as in a circle of intimate friends. Then Stalin rose again:

«Comrades,» he said, «now I invite you to the cinema.»

We all rose and Stalin led us to the Kremlin cinema, where he personally chose the films our delegation would see. They were some documentary colour films with scenes from various parts

of the Soviet Union, as well as the film «The Far-away Bride».

This brought our second visit to Stalin to a close.

THIRD MEETING

November 1949

A five-hour meeting at Sukhumi. A tête-à-tête talk with Comrade Stalin. Once again about the Greek problem. About the situation in Yugoslavia after Tito's betrayal. The problem of Kosova and other parts of Yugoslavia inhabited by Albanians. «To attack Albania is not easy». «If Albania is strong internally it has no danger from abroad». An unforgettable dinner. Again about the economic and cultural development of Albania. Stand towards religion and the clergy. «The Vatican is a centre of reaction, a tool in the service of capital and world reaction».

In November 1949 I went to Moscow for the third time. On the way to the Soviet Union I stopped over at Budapest where I met Rakosi, who welcomed me very warmly and wanted to know about the economic situation of Albania, about the hostile work of the Titoites and the war of the Greek democratic forces. We had a comradely talk,

exchanged a series of opinions and, as I recall, he informed me about the situation in Hungary.

Before I reached Moscow, I stopped briefly at Kiev. There I received an exceptionally warm welcome.

At Moscow Lavrentyev, Marshal Sokolovsky, Orlov and other military and civilian personalities had come out to meet me. Later I met Malenkov with whom I had the first short talk.

Malenkov suggested to me that if I wished and had the possibility, I should write out the questions which I had in mind to raise in the talks so that it would be easier for him to transmit them to Comrade Stalin.

«Then», he told me, «we shall await Comrade Stalin's reply whether you, Comrade Enver, are to go to talk personally with him in the city of Sukhumi, where he is on holiday, or are to talk with some other comrade of the Soviet leadership whom Joseph Vissarionovich will recommend.»

That evening I wrote out the questions we intended to discuss and handed them to Malenkov.

After he was informed about this, Stalin instructed that I should go to Sukhumi so that we could talk together. And this is what we did.

I met Comrade Stalin in the garden of the house where he was spending his holidays; a marvellous garden full of trees and beds of multicoloured flowers bordering the roads and paths. I saw him from a distance strolling at his usual

slow pace, a little bent and with his hands behind his back.

As always he welcomed me very warmly and behaved in a very comradely way. He seemed to be in very good health.

«I stay outside all day,» he told me, «and only go inside to eat.»

Very happy to see him again and to find him so well, I wished him:

«May you live another hundred years, Comrade Stalin!»

«A hundred?» he said with a laugh, narrowing his eyes a little. «That's not much. In Georgia we've old people of 145 years of age and still going strong.»

«Another hundred Comrade Stalin, this is what our people say, another hundred above the age you have!» I told him.

«Tak harasho!*» he said in the best of humour. «That's fine, I agree.» We laughed.

Our talk in which only Comrade Stalin and I took part (as well as our interpreter, Sterjo Gjokoreci), was held outside on the balcony. It was nine o'clock in the evening, Moscow time. Stalin was wearing a cap in his head, a brown scarf round his neck and a brown woollen suit. When we were about to sit down to begin the talk, out

* Very good (Russ.).

of respect I took off my hat and hung it on the rack, but he said to me:

«Don't take your hat off, keep it on, too.»

I protested but he insisted, being concerned that I should not get a cold because it was damp outside, and told his aide-de-camp to bring it to me.

During this unforgettable meeting I discussed a series of problems with Comrade Stalin.

Among other things, I raised with him our views about the incorrect stands of leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party and the unjust accusations they had made against us. Amongst other things, I said that the Central Committee of our Party had always had close relations with the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party, that our Party and people had always openly supported the just and heroic struggle of the Greek people for freedom and democracy, and against the Anglo-American foreign interference. «Precisely because of the special links we have had with the Greek comrades,» I continued, «especially during 1949 we have seen mistakes and defects in the leadership of the Greek Communist Party and several times we have expressed our views about these mistakes to them openly, in a comradely way and in a sound internationalist spirit. We told them of our views once again after the blows which the Greek democratic forces suffered at Vitsi and Gra-

mos. However, the leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party did not accept our comradely criticisms as correct, this time either, but considering themselves offended, went so far as to send a letter from their Political Bureau to the Political Bureau of our Party, in which they accused our leading comrades of being 'Trotskyite' and 'Titoite' in regard to our judgement about the line followed by the Greek leaders during their war.

«Our Political Bureau,» I told Comrade Stalin, «analysed the letter of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party signed by Nicos Zachariades and arrived at the conclusion that with its mistaken views and stands, the Zachariades group had not only gravely damaged the new line which the Greek Communist Party adopted after the end of the anti-Hitlerite war, but was now trying to put the responsibility on to others for the defeats and the sabotage which it had inflicted on this line itself.»

«When did you first meet Zachariades?» Stalin asked me.

After I replied he said to me:

«Comrade Zachariades has never said anything against you Albanians to our comrades,» and at this time he opened a letter which the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party had sent to the Political Bureau of the PLA and read it in silence. Then looking at me he added:

«Here I don't see the accusations which you

mention, but I read only that they accuse you of having hindered them in some technical matters.»

«At first,» I said to Comrade Stalin, «they made the accusations I mentioned orally and later in writing, in their last letter. We have sent you a copy of this letter and our reply through Ambassador Chuvakhin.»

After asking about the dates of these letters which he had not seen, Stalin gave the order to look them up. In a little while they brought them to him. When he had read them he said to me:

«I have been on holiday and I have not read these materials. I have read all your other letters.» Then he added:

«The Greeks have sought to talk and reach agreement with you.»

«In the opinions and criticisms which we have made of the Greek comrades,» I told Comrade Stalin, «we have always set out from sincere comradely aims, considering this an internationalist duty, irrespective of whether or not our opinions would be pleasing to them. We have wanted and have always tried to resolve these problems with the Greek comrades in a comradely way and a healthy communist spirit, while they for their part, have not only failed to display a similar spirit of understanding but also make accusations against us and are trying to lay the blame on others. Such views and stands are unacceptable to us,» I said and added that Comrade Zachariades

should bear in mind and not forget that we ourselves were responsible to the Albanian Party and people for the affairs of our Party, people and Homeland just as he was responsible to his party and people.

Listening to me attentively, Comrade Stalin asked:

«Are any of the Greek democrats who were given temporary asylum in Albania still there? How do you intend to act from now on?»

In connection with these questions, I gave Comrade Stalin a detailed explanation of our stand. Amongst other things, I said that the imperialists, the monarcho-fascists and reaction, for ulterior motives, had long been making accusations against us alleging that we were to blame for what had occurred in Greece and were interfering in the internal affairs of Greece, and so on. «However the whole world knows,» I said, «that we have not interfered and never will interfere in the internal affairs of Greece.

«In regard to the support which we have expressed and still express for the struggle of the Greek people, this we consider a legitimate right and a duty which every people ought to carry out in regard to the just fight of a fraternal country. But the fact that we are neighbours with Greece brought about that many innocent Greek men, women and children, maimed, terrified, and hotly pursued by the monarcho-fascists, came over our

border as refugees. Towards all of them we adopted a just and very careful stand: we gave them aid and shelter and established them in allocated centres far from the border with Greece.»

Continuing my explanation of this problem, I told Comrade Stalin that the influx of these refugees had created many acute difficulties for us and, apart from carrying out our humanitarian duty, we were being careful to avoid allowing the presence of Greek democratic refugees on our territory to serve as an opportunity for the further incitement of the anti-Albania psychosis of people in the Greek government. This was one of the main reasons why we welcomed the request of Comrade Zachariades and the Greek refugees themselves to leave Albania for asylum in other countries. «At present,» I added, «following the incorrect stands towards us by leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party and the grave accusations they are making against us, our Political Bureau thinks that the departure of those few Greek refugees who still remain in our country has become even more urgent.» I told him that not only the democratic soldiers, but also those Greek leaders who had also been given asylum in Albania recently, ought to leave.

Continuing my presentation of our views in connection with the Greek problem, I also told Comrade Stalin about some other mistakes of the Greek comrades, such as their underestimating of

protracted partisan war spread over the whole country and their reliance solely on «frontal war» with a «regular army»; their elimination of the role of the political commissar in the partisan units, etc. «The pressure of mistaken, petty-bourgeois views of career officers who did not want or tolerate trusted party people beside them,» I told Comrade Stalin, «brought about that the role of the commissar in command in the Greek Democratic Army was diminished, considered of second-rate importance, and even totally eliminated. These and other such mistakes make us think that there is confusion, opportunism and false modesty in the leadership of the Greek Communist Party and hiding of the leading role of the party.»

After listening attentively to all I put forward, Comrade Stalin, amongst other things, said to me:

«Like you, we too, agreed to the request of Zachariades for the departure of the Greek democratic refugees from Albania and have interested ourselves in assisting them to be settled where they wanted to go. We did this because such a stand is humanitarian. Aid for this number of people was a burden even for us, but they had to go somewhere, because they could not stay in a country bordering on Greece.

«The stand which you have adopted towards the democratic soldiers who crossed your border seems to me correct,» added Comrade Stalin. «As for their weapons which have been left in Alba-

nia, I am of the opinion that you Albanians should keep them, because you deserve them.

«It appears,» continued Comrade Stalin, «that the leaders of the Greek Communist Party have not evaluated the situation properly. They have underestimated the strength of the enemy, thinking they had to do only with Tsaldaris and not with the British and Americans. As to the final withdrawal by the Greek comrades, there are people who say that they should not have retreated, but I think that, after what had occurred, the democratic soldiers absolutely had to retreat, otherwise they would have all been wiped out.

«On the other questions the Greek comrades are not right. They could not wage a frontal war with a regular army, because they did not have either an army capable of this kind of war, or a sufficient breadth of territory for this. Overestimating their strength and possibilities, they did everything openly, making it possible for the enemy to discover all their positions and their arsenal.

«Nevertheless, I think you should reach agreement with the Greek comrades. This is my view. What they say about you Albanians having adopted a 'Trotskyite' and 'Titoite' stand towards them are baseless accusations.»

At dinner Stalin asked me where and when I thought we could meet together with the Greek leaders to clear up the disagreements over principles which had arisen between us.

«We are ready to meet whenever you like,» I said. «Possibly even in January next year and we should hold the meeting in Moscow.»

Continuing the talk with Comrade Stalin, we spoke about the grave situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia following Tito's betrayal, about the anti-Marxist, nationalist, chauvinist policy which the Titoite clique pursued against Albania and the other countries of people's democracy. In particular I spoke about the situation of the Albanian population in Kosova and some other parts of Yugoslavia.

«The line of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in regard to Kosova and other regions in Yugoslavia with an Albanian population, » I told Comrade Stalin, «from the beginning of the anti-fascist war to Liberation, and even more after Liberation, was and is chauvinist and nationalist. If it were in a sound Marxist-Leninist position, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia should have devoted special attention during the Anti-fascist National Liberation War to the question of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia, because it is a minority large in numbers and right on the Albanian border. In the first years of the war, our view was that the question of the future of Kosova and other Albanian regions in Yugoslavia should not be raised during the war, but the Albanians of Kosova

and other Albanian regions should fight against fascism within the framework of Yugoslavia, and this problem would be resolved by the two sister parties, by the people's democratic regimes which would be established in Albania and Yugoslavia, and by the Albanian population there itself, after the war.

«The main question was that the Albanians of Kosova and other parts of Yugoslavia had to be persuaded and convinced that by fighting fascism, shoulder to shoulder with the peoples of Yugoslavia, after the victory they would be free and the possibilities would be provided for them to decide their future for themselves, that is, that they themselves would decide whether they would be united with Albania or remain within the framework of Yugoslavia as an entity with a special status.

«A correct and principled policy in this direction would have brought about that the Albanian population of Kosova and of other regions would have been mobilized with all their strength in the great anti-fascist war, irrespective of the savage reaction and the demagogic fascist propaganda. Right from the start of the war we told the Yugoslav leaders of our opinion that they should mobilize the Albanian population in a patriotic spirit, should allow them to fly the Albanian flag along with the Yugoslav flag, should think about the participation of a bigger number from the Alba-

nian element in the new state power to be created in the course of the war, should support and develop among the Albanians both the feeling of great love for Albania, their Homeland, and the feeling of fraternity in the just war of the peoples of Yugoslavia, that very close collaboration should be created and strengthened between the Albanian fighting units of Kosova and the National Liberation War of our country, while these fighting units of Kosova and other regions should be linked with and guided by the General Staff of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, etc. But, as the reality showed,» I continued presenting my ideas to Comrade Stalin, «these just and essential demands were not to the liking of the Yugoslav leadership, therefore, not only was it obscure on statements of principle, but Tito made accusations of 'nationalist deviations' against us and those Yugoslav comrades who considered these demands correct.

«The nationalist and chauvinist policy on the part of the Yugoslav leadership in Kosova and the other regions inhabited by Albanians was further intensified after the war, irrespective of the demagogy and some partial measures which the Tito-Rankovich clique took at first, such as the opening of an occasional Albanian school.

«Nevertheless, in the first post-war years we still considered the Communist Party of Yugoslavia a sister party and hoped that the question of

Kosova and the other Albanian regions would be resolved correctly as soon as the appropriate moment arrived.

«We thought that this moment had been reached at the time of the signing of the treaty[1] with Yugoslavia and I raised this problem with Tito then. Tito asked me what I thought about Kosova. 'Kosova and the other regions of Yugoslavia with an Albanian population,' I replied, 'are Albanian territory which the great powers unjustly tore away from Albania; they belong to Albania and should be returned to Albania. Now that we are two socialist countries the conditions exist for this problem to be solved correctly'. Tito said to me: T agree, this is what we desire, but for the moment we are unable to do anything because the Serbs do not understand such a thing'. 'If they don't understand it today,' I said, 'they will have to understand it tomorrow'.»

At this moment Comrade Stalin asked me when I first met Tito and the other Yugoslav leaders. After telling him that I met them after the war, on the first visit I made to Belgrade in 1946, I continued:

«The problem of Kosova and of the Albanian population living in other regions of Yugoslavia,

1 The reference is to the Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of Albania and Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, signed in July 1946.

and its future, remains a problem which is up to the people of Kosova and the other regions to decide for themselves. However, we for our part, without ever interfering in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia, will never cease supporting the rights of our brothers of the one blood, living in Yugoslavia and will raise our voice against the terror, the policy of extermination, which the Tito-Rankovich clique is pursuing towards them.» Finally I told Comrade Stalin that we had written him a letter about this problem.

«I have read your letter,» Comrade Stalin replied. «I agree with you that the people of Kosova themselves should decide the question of their future.»

«Apart from the anti-Marxist policy Tito has pursued towards Kosova,» Stalin continued, «he also wanted to annex Albania itself. This became obvious when Tito tried to send his divisions into Albania. We prevented such an action. Both of us know that the units of the Yugoslav army were to be dispatched to Albania to assist Koçi Xoxe, so that, by means of these Yugoslav forces, he would liquidate free Albania and the Albanian Government.»

«Tito,» I said, «took advantage of the fact that Greece at that period was committing provocations on our borders at every opportunity and he hatched up the intrigue that we would allegedly be subjected to 'a large-scale attack from Greece',

that 'the attack was imminent' and 'constituted a threat to Albania,' etc. After this, in collaboration with the traitors Koçi Xoxe and company, with whom he had secret links, Tito suggested to us that he should send his armed forces to Albania, precisely to Korça, and later also to Gjirokastra, 'to defend us from the Greek attack'. We strongly opposed this suggestion and immediately informed you about it. We were convinced that under cover of these divisions to help us, he aimed to occupy Albania, and this was also the view expressed in the reply you sent us in connection with our report.»

With a chuckle expressing both anger and deep irony, Stalin said:

«And now Tito is accusing us of the Soviet Union, of allegedly interfering in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia, of allegedly wanting to attack Yugoslavia! No, we have never wanted to do such a thing and it has never even crossed our minds because we are Marxist-Leninists, we are a socialist country, and we cannot act as Tito thinks and acts.

«I think,» continued Comrade Stalin, «that as Marxist-Leninists, in the future too, we must attack the anti-Marxist views and actions of Tito and the Yugoslav leadership, but I stress that in no way should we ever interfere in their internal affairs. That would not be Marxist. The Yugoslav communists and the Yugoslav people must attend

to that matter; it is up to them to solve the problems of the present and the future of their country. It is in this context, also, that I see the problem of Kosova and the Albanian population living in other parts of Yugoslavia. We must not leave any way for the Titoite enemy to accuse us later of allegedly waging our fight to break up the Yugoslav Federation. This is a delicate moment and needs very careful handling, because by saying, 'See, they want to break up Yugoslavia,' Tito not only gathers reaction around him, but also tries to win the patriotic elements over to his side.

«As for Albania's international position,» Comrade Stalin went on, «this has been defined by the meeting of the three foreign ministers of the United States of America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. You know of the declarations of Hull, Eden and Molotov on this question. A big noise is being made alleging that Yugoslavia, Greece, etc., are going to attack Albania but this is no light matter, either for them or for any other enemy, » said Comrade Stalin and he asked me:

«Are the Greeks continuing their provocations on the border?»

«After the lessons we have given them, especially this summer, they have ceased their armed attacks,» I said, «nevertheless we are always vigilant and remain on the alert.»

«Tsaldaris is very busy with his internal troubles,» Comrade Stalin went on, «he has no time

now to engage in provocations, as the monarcho-fascists are quarrelling amongst themselves. I think also, that the Anglo-Americans cannot attack you from outside, but will try to attack you from within, by attempting to organize insurrections and movements, by infiltrating agents and assassins to kill the Albanian leaders, etc. The enemies will try to stir up troubles and conflicts inside Albania, but if Albania is strong internally, it need fear no danger from abroad. This is the main thing. If Albania pursues a wise and principled policy, it has no reason to fear anything.

«As for the documents of the three foreign ministers,» Comrade Stalin said, «these you should keep in mind and from time to time, at opportune moments, you should mention them to remind the 'friends' of them.

«However, the internal situation must be strengthened continuously in all directions; it must always be strengthened. This is the main thing,» he said and asked me:

«Do you have defence forces under the Ministry of Internal Affairs to attack the counterrevolutionary bands and put down the attempts of internal reaction?»

«Yes,» I said. «These forces, made up of the sons of the people, have done a commendable job, especially in the early years, in clearing the country of the gangs of criminals, enemies hiding in the mountains, and agents smuggled in from abroad.

In close collaboration with the people, our military forces are ever better fulfilling their tasks and the Party and our state power have always seen to it that they are very well trained and equipped.»

«You must keep these forces in constant readiness to settle accounts with the counterrevolutionary groups, as well as with the possible banditis,» Comrade Stalin advised me in connection with the situation in Albania and asked me:

«Did Tito denounce the Treaty of Friendship with Albania?»

«Yes,» I said. «And the way Tito denounced the Treaty was typically Titoite. On November 2 this year the Yugoslav leaders sent us an official note full of slanders and base accusations, in which they called on us, in the form of an ultimatum, to abandon our road and take their road of betrayal. Then, on November 12, without waiting for a reply to their first note, they sent us their second note in which they denounced the Treaty.

«However, we gave them our reply to both their notes, just as they deserved, and we are still living very well, even without their treaty of 'friendship'.»

This meeting passed in a warm, happy and very intimate atmosphere. After the tête-à-tête talk I had with Comrade Stalin, we went into the house for dinner. At the entrance to the dining-

room there was a kind of an anteroom where we hung our coats and hats. In the dining-room itself, which was half-panelled in timber, there was a long table, and here and there other tables for serving dishes and drinks. Also present at the dinner were two Soviet generals, the one Stalin's aide-de-camp and the other my escort during my visit. Stalin talked, asked questions, cracked jokes with us and the two generals. When we sat at the table he made jokes about the dishes. The way the dinner was served was very interesting. There was no waiter to serve us. A girl brought in all the food in dishes covered to keep them hot; she put the dishes on the table and left. Stalin got up, took the dish himself and, standing there, carved the chicken, then sat down and resumed his jokes.

«Let us begin,» he said addressing me. «What are you waiting for? Do you think the waiters will come to serve us? There you have the dishes, take them, lift the lids and start eating, or you'll go supperless.»

He laughed again heartily, that exhilarating laugh of his that went right to one's heart. From time to time he raised his glass and drank a toast. At one moment, Stalin's aide-de-camp seeing that Stalin was taking another kind of drink from the table, made an attempt to stop him and told him not to mix his drinks. He did so as it was his duty to take care of Stalin. Stalin laughed and said that it would do no harm. But when the general

insisted, Stalin replied to him in a tone half angry, half in fun:

«Leave me in peace, don't pester me like Tito!» and looked me right in the eye, laughing. We all laughed.

By the end of the dinner he showed me a fruit and said: «Have you ever tasted this kind of fruit?» «No,» I said, «I've never seen it. How is it eaten?» He told me its name. It was an Indian or tropical fruit. He took it, peeled it and gave it to me. «Try it,» he said, «my hands are clean.» And I was reminded of the fine custom of our people who, while talking, peel the apple and give it to the guest to eat.

In this unforgettable meeting with Comrade Stalin, both during the conversation in the garden and during the dinner, we talked in a profoundly comradely spirit about problems of the economic and socio-cultural development of our country, too.

As in all the other meetings, after inquiring in detail about our economic situation and the over-all development of the new Albania, Stalin gave me a lot of valuable advice which has always helped us in our work.

I gave Comrade Stalin a general outline of the state of affairs with us, told him about the successes achieved in the realization of plans, about the great mobilization of the people, as well as about a number of difficulties and shortcomings

which we were aware of and were struggling to overcome.

«Besides the shortcomings in our work,» I told Comrade Stalin, «the systematic sabotage of our economy by the Yugoslavs has created very great difficulties in the realization of plans in industry and other sectors. Now we are making great and all-round efforts to eliminate the consequences of this work of sabotage and we are giving particular importance to the sector of socialist industry, which, although taking its first steps, has great prospects in our country. Along with the construction of new projects, our mineral resources constitute a major field of great value in this direction. There is unexploited mineral wealth in our country. The group of scientists and geologists which the Soviet Government will send to our country this year, will provide us with further information on where these resources occur and in what quantities. On the other hand, we are exploiting deposits of oil, chromium, copper and other minerals. According to expert information there are big reserves of oil, chromium, copper and other minerals, not to mention natural bitumen, in our country. Through struggle and efforts, with the mobilization of all our forces and possibilities, as well as with the credits granted by the Soviet Government, we have improved the exploitation of these valuable products. But we feel that big investments are required in order to step up the extrac-

tion of these products to the maximum. For the time being it's impossible for us to do this with the forces and means we possess. We have used the bulk of the credits accorded by the Soviet Government and the countries of people's democracy,» I went on, «in order to improve the exploitation of the existing mineral resources to a certain degree. This means that, on the one hand, we are unable to exploit the already discovered underground assets such as chromium, copper and oil and those which will be discovered in the future, as we would like to, and, on the other hand, we are unable to develop the other branches of industry at rapid rates.

«Our Political Bureau has studied this question, which has great importance for the future of our people, and has arrived at the conclusion that, for the time being, we lack the internal means and possibilities to carry out this work ourselves on a full scale. Because of this we should like to know your opinion about whether you consider it proper to form joint Albanian-Soviet companies for the oil, copper and chromium industries. This might be a problem which we could put before the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, but before doing this we want to know your opinion, Comrade Stalin.»

In reply, after expressing his joy about our successes in the country's economic development, Comrade Stalin told me that he did not agree on

the creation of joint Albanian-Soviet companies and explained to me that though some steps had initially been taken in this direction with some of the countries of people's democracy, they had considered them wrong and given them up.

«We shall help you today and in the future, too,» he continued, «therefore we are going to give you more people and more of everything else than we have given you so far. We now have the practical possibilities to give you more because our current five-year plan is going on well.»

I thanked Comrade Stalin for the aid they had given and would give us in the future.

«Thank me when you receive the aid,» he said smiling, and then asked:

«What do your trains run on — oil or coal?»

«Coal, mainly,» I told him. «but the new types of locomotives we have received run on oil.»

«Do you process your oil? How is work going on with the refinery?» he asked, continuing the talk.

«We are building a new refinery with Soviet equipment.» I said. «Next year we shall instal the machinery.»

«Do you have coal?»

«We do,» I told him, «and geological surveys show that our prospects in this direction are good.»

«You must work to discover and extract as

much coal as possible,» Comrade Stalin advised me. «It is very necessary for the development of industry and the economy in general, therefore give it attention, because it will be difficult for you without it.»

As at all the other meetings, Comrade Stalin displayed special interest in and concern about the situation of our peasantry, the development of agriculture and the policy of our Party in this important field. He asked me how we were getting on with cereal production and what seeds we used for bread grain.

I told Comrade Stalin that we had tried to increase the production of grain from year to year, because this was a major problem of vital importance to our country, that we had achieved a number of successes in this direction, but that we had to do still more work and make even greater efforts to ensure the bread for our people.

«Your government must work with might and main for the development of agriculture,» Comrade Stalin told me among other things, «must assist the peasantry so that the peasant sees concretely that the government is taking an interest in him and in the continuous improvement of his life.» Then he asked:

«You have a good climate, don't you?»

«Yes, we do,» I told him.

«Yes, yes,» he said. «Everything can be planted and grown in your country. But the impor-

tant thing is what you sow. You must select good seeds,» he advised me, «and for this you should seek our assistance. You must train many agronomists of your own for the future because Albania is an agricultural country and agriculture advances with good work and thorough scientific knowledge. Send an agronomist here to select seeds,» he added.

Then he asked me:

«What about cotton? Is the peasant interested in cultivating it?»

I told Comrade Stalin that in the past we had no tradition in the cultivation of this crop, but now we were increasing the area planted to cotton from year to year. This was essential, because apart from anything else, the textile combine which we were building would be based on our own cotton.

«You must encourage the peasant to produce,» Comrade Stalin advised me, «by paying him higher prices for cotton. When the socialist ideology is still not implanted in his consciousness, the peasant does not readily give you anything without first looking to his own interest.»

Further on, he asked me:

«You still have virgin and unused lands?!»

«Yes, we have,» said I, «both in the hills and mountains and on the plains. The swamps and marshes, in particular, have been a plague both for our agriculture and the health of the people.»

I added that in the years of people's power we were carrying out a great deal of work to drain marshes and swamps, and had achieved a number of successes but we had big plans for this sector and we should realize them step by step.

«The peasantry,» Comrade Stalin told me, «must not leave an inch of land untilled. The peasants must be persuaded to increase the area of arable land.

«In order to avoid the evils of swamps and combat malaria,» he advised me, «you must plant eucalypts. This is a very good tree and it grows in many regions of our country. Mosquitoes keep well clear of this tree which grows quickly and absorbs the water of marshes.»

During dinner Comrade Stalin also asked me:

«What do the Albanian peasants who visited the Soviet Union, say?»

I told him that they had returned to Albania with very good and indelible impressions. In their talks with comrades and friends, at meetings and open discussions with the people, they spoke with profound admiration about everything they saw in the Soviet Union, about its all-round successes and especially about the development of Soviet agriculture. Among other things, I told him how one of our peasants, who had been in the Soviet Union, described the sample of the Georgian maize.

This pleased Comrade Stalin greatly and the

next day I learnt that he had told it to some Soviet comrades who came to visit me. On this occasion Stalin, personally, had instructed them to bring me some bags of seed-maize from Georgia. Also on his instructions, that same day they brought us eucalypt seeds, too.

During this meeting, Comrade Stalin talked, as always, quietly and calmly, asked questions and listened very attentively, expressed his opinion, gave us advice, but always in a thoroughly comradely spirit.

«There are no cut - and - dried prescriptions about how you should behave on this or that occasion, about how this or that problem should be solved,» he would repeat frequently, according to the various questions I raised.

During the talk with Stalin I pointed out to him the stand of the clergy, especially the catholic clergy in Albania, our position in relation to it, and asked how he judged our stand.

«The Vatican is a centre of reaction,» Comrade Stalin told me among other things, «it is a tool in the service of capital and world reaction, which supports this international organization of subversion and espionage. It is a fact that many catholic priests and missionaries of the Vatican are old-hands at espionage on a world scale. Imperialism has tried and is still trying to realize its aims by means of them.» Then he told me of what had happened once in Yalta with Roosevelt, the

representative of the American catholic church and others.

During the talk with Roosevelt. Churchill and others on problems of the anti-Hitlerite war, they had said: «We must no longer fight the Pope in Rome. What have you against him that you attack him?!»

«I have nothing against him.» Stalin had replied.

«Then, let us make the Pope our ally,» they had said. «let us admit him to the coalition of the great allies.»

«All right,» Stalin had said, «but the anti-fascist alliance is an alliance to wipe out fascism and nazism. As you know, gentlemen, this war is waged with soldiers, artillery, machine-guns, tanks, aircraft. If the Pope or you can tell us what armies, artillery, machine-guns, tanks and other weapons of war he possesses, let him become our ally. We don't need an ally for talk and incense.»

After that, they had made no further mention of the question of the Pope, and the Vatican.

«Were there catholic priests in Albania who betrayed the people?» Comrade Stalin asked me then.

«Yes.» I told him. «Indeed the heads of the catholic church made common cause with the nazi-fascist foreign invaders right from the start, placed themselves completely in their service, and did everything within their power to disrupt our

National Liberation War and perpetuate the foreign domination.»

«What did you do with them?»

«After the victory,» I told him, «we arrested them and put them on trial and they received the punishment they deserved.»

«You have done well,» he said.

«But were there others who maintained a good stand?» he asked.

«Yes,» I replied, «especially clergymen of the Orthodox and Moslem religion.»

«What have you done with them?» he asked me.

«We have kept them close to us. In its First Resolution our Party called on all the masses, including the clergymen, to unite for the sake of the great national cause, in the great war for freedom and independence. Many of them joined us. threw themselves into the war and made a valuable contribution to the liberation of the Homeland. After Liberation they embraced the policy of our Party and continued the work for the reconstruction of the country. We have always valued and honoured such clergymen, and some of them have now been elected deputies to the People's Assembly, or promoted to senior ranks in our army. In another case, a former clergyman linked himself so closely with the National Liberation Movement and the Party that in the course of the war he saw the futility of the religious dogma, abandoned his

religion, embraced the communist ideology and thanks to his struggle, work and conviction we have admitted him to the ranks of the Party.»

«Very good,» Stalin said to me. «What more could I add? If you are clear about the fact that religion is opium for the people and that the Vatican is a centre of obscurantism, espionage and subversion against the cause of the peoples, then you know that you should act precisely as you have done.

«You should never put the struggle against the clergy, who carry out espionage and disruptive activities, on the religious plane,» Stalin said, «but always on the political plane. The clergy must obey the laws of the state, because these laws express the will of the working class and the Working people. You must make the people quite clear about these laws and the hostility of the reactionary clergymen so that even that part of the population which believes in religion will clearly see that, under the guise of religion, the clergymen carry out activities hostile to the Homeland and the people themselves. Hence the people, convinced through facts and arguments, together with the Government, should struggle against the hostile clergy. You should isolate and condemn only those clergymen who do not obey the Government and commit grave crimes against the state. But, I insist, the people must be convinced about the crimes of these clergymen, and should also be

convinced about the futility of the religious ideology and the evils that result from it.»

I remember that at the end of this unforgettable meeting Comrade Stalin gave us a piece of general advice: strengthen the internal situation well; strengthen the political work with the masses.

Stalin kept me a full 5 hours at this meeting. We had come at 9 o'clock in the evening and left at 2 after midnight. After we rose from the table, Stalin said to me:

«Go and put on your coat.»

We came out with the two generals and I was waiting to return to the room where we had our meeting in order to thank him for the warm reception and to say good-bye. We waited a little, looked into the room, but he was not there.

One of the generals told us:

«No doubt he has gone out into the garden.

True enough, there we found him — modest, smiling, with his cap on his head and his brown scarf round his neck. He accompanied us to the car. I thanked him.

«Don't mention it,» he replied. «I shall phone you tomorrow. We may have another meeting. You must stay another couple of days here to visit Sukhumi.»

Next evening, on November 25, I was waiting impatiently for the telephone to ring, but

unfortunately, I did not meet Comrade Stalin again. At 1.00 a.m. of the 26th he had arrived in Sochi and sent to me his regards through the general who accompanied me. From Sukhumi, on the 25th of November 1949, I sent Mehmet this telegram:

> «Finished work yesterday. They will help us in everything. All I requested was agreed to with very great cordiality. I am well. Can hardly be there for the celebrations. My best greetings for the celebrations. I leave by the first means available.»

On 25th of November we visited the town of Sukhumi, which had 60,000 inhabitants. The Minister of the Interior of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia and another general accompanied me during the visit to Sukhumi. Sukhumi was a very beautiful, clean city, full of gardens and parks. There were many trees from tropical countries. Flowers everywhere. Among other things, I was struck by a wonderful park which had been built by the inhabitants of this city in just 50 days. The park was a little larger than the space in front of our «Dajti» Hotel. By night Sukhumi was ablaze with lights. Its inhabitants were handsome, smiling, looked happy and content. Not an inch of uncultivated ground to be seen. Stretching before our eyes were plantations of mandar-

ins, lemons, grape-fruit, oranges, and grapes, boundless plains sown with wheat, maize, etc. The hills were cultivated and covered with fruit-trees and forests. In the city and everywhere one saw tall eucalypt trees.

We went to see a state farm on the outskirts of the city. It was nothing but hills covered with mandarins, oranges, lemons and grape vines. The branches of the mandarin trees were breaking under the weight of the fruit. One tree produced 1,500, 1,600, 2,000 mandarins. «Sometimes we cannot manage to pick them all,» the director of the state farm told us. We visited the place where the mandarins etc. were packed. Women were working there. A big machine graded the oranges and mandarins one by one, according to size.

We also visited an old bridge built back in the 15th century and preserved as a monument of antiquity as well as the botanical garden. It was a garden rich in trees and flowers of different varieties. We also saw a centre where they raised monkeys which get up to all sorts of amusing games. We were told that this centre had served Pavlov for his scientific experiments.

The Georgians were very kindly people. They welcomed and farewelled us in the friendliest way.

In the morning of November 26, the Soviet comrade who accompanied me came with the newspaper «Krasnaya Svezda» in his hand and

told me the news of my promotion by the Presidium of the People's Assembly of the PRA.[1]

At 8.00 hours of November 27, we left for Moscow by plane. The flight lasted 5 and a half hours. A few days later I returned to the Homeland.

1 On November 21, 1949, on the proposal of the Council of Ministers of the PRA and the Political Bureau of the CC of the PLA, the Presidium of the People's Assembly of the PRA issued the decree promoting Comrade Enver Hoxha to the rank of Army General.

FOURTH MEETING

January 1950

Confrontation in Stalin's presence over disagreements of principle between the leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania and the leaders of the Greek Communist Party. Present were: Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov; Enver Hoxha, Mehmet Shehu; Nicos Zachariades, Mitsos Partsalides. On the strategy and tactics of the Greek Democratic Army. Varkiza. The tactics of passive defence is the mother of defeat. Why the defeats at Vitsi and Gramos? On the leading role of the party in the army. The place and role of the commissar. Nicos Zachariades expresses his views. Stalin's evaluation.

During the talk I had with Comrade Stalin in Sukhumi, in November 1949, he asked me when we could meet the representatives of the Greek Communist Party to clear up the disagreements of principle between us and the leaders of that party. We were agreed on January, and after the Greek

comrades agreed to this, the meeting took place in the beginning of January 1950 in Moscow, in the Kremlin. From the Soviet side the meeting was attended by Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov and a number of functionaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From our Party it was Comrade Mehmet Shehu and I, while from the Greek Communist Party Nicos Zachariades and Mitsos Partsalides. The meeting was held in Stalin's office.

Unpretentious and kindly as usual, Stalin welcomed us with a smile, rose from his desk and came to shake hands with all of us in turn. He opened the talk by asking me:

«Comrade Hoxha, what have you to say about the comrades of the Greek Communist Party?»

At the same time he addressed the Greek comrades by saying:

«Let the Albanian comrades speak first, then comes your turn to put forward your opinions on what they will say.»

Taking the floor I said:

«Comrade Stalin, we have sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union about the disagreements over matters of principle we have with the Greek Communist Party, especially with its main leaders. We have requested this meeting in your presence in order for you to judge whether we are right or wrong in our views.»

«I am aware of the questions you have raised,» said Comrade Stalin, «but I would like you to repeat the problems you are concerned about here in the presence of the Greek comrades.»

«Of course I shall state here all the questions our Party has put forward in the letter we have sent you. We have discussed these questions with the Greek comrades, too, especially with Comrade Nicos Zachariades, with Comrade Ioannides, with General Vlantas, with Bardzotas, and other comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. I would like to begin by pointing out that we have had disagreements on a number of questions, but here I shall speak about the most important ones.»

«That is what we want, too,» stressed Stalin.

Then I began my expose:

«Our first disagreement with the Greek comrades was over the strategy and tactics of the war of the Greek Democratic Army. Both for us Albanians and for the Greek people, the war against Hitlerite and Italian fascists was a liberation war, on which the fate of our peoples depended. We had to and did base this war on the heroic war of the Red Army of the Soviet Union. Right from the start, we Albanians were convinced that we would come out victorious, because our entire people had risen in a great liberation war, in which they had beside them the great Soviet Union, which would smash German nazism.

«Our Party supported the Soviet-British-American alliance, because, through to the end, it considered this an anti-fascist coalition to crush the German nazis. But at the same time we never created the illusion that the Anglo-American imperialists would be the loyal friends and allies of the Albanian people. On the contrary, while supporting the alliance in general, we made a radical distinction between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans from the beginning. With this I want to say that our Party, our army and the General Staff of our army not only never submitted to the dictate of the British and the Allied Mediterranean Headquarters, but even when we allowed them to give us advice, we took it with very great caution. We asked for weapons from the British but we saw they sent us very few. As you know, we waged partisan warfare, from which we went on later to big detachments up to the creation of the regular National Liberation Army.

«The Greek people fought under the same conditions as we. They rose against Italian fascist aggressors, drove them back, defeated them and even entered Albania. Although our Communist Party was not founded at that time, the communists and our people helped the Greeks in their war against fascist Italy, although they were under occupation themselves. However, with the intervention of the Hitlerite army in the war against Greece,

the Greek monarchist army was forced to withdraw to its own territory and was defeated. After that period, the Greek people, led by the Greek Communist Party, which created the EAM, organized the partisan units and other bigger units later, began the resistance and the National Liberation War.

«During the National Liberation War which they waged, our two peoples developed even closer fraternal relations. Friendly ties have existed between the Albanian and the Greek peoples from the past. As is known, many Albanians participated and played a very important role in the Greek revolution of the 20's of the last century, led by Ypsilantes. However, this time the character of our war was the same and our communist parties were at the head of the peoples of our two countries. We established relations between ourselves, and even undertook military operations with combined fighting units against the German armies on Greek territory. Just as in our country, reaction in Greece, too, was strong and the occupiers were very well organized. This, too, was a phenomenon in common.

«On our part, we made efforts and achieved some results in isolating the heads of reaction and in winning over elements that had made mistakes from its ranks. I cannot say with precision how they acted in Greece, but we have criticized the comrades of the leadership of the Greek Com-

munist Party because the EAM and they themselves committed a major political mistake of principle in subordinating the National Liberation War of the Greek people to the Anglo-American strategy and placing it virtually under the direction of the British and the Mediterranean Headquarters. We addressed our criticism to Comrade Nicos Zachariades personally.

«The person mainly to blame for this situation was Siantos, who in the absence of Zachariades — at that time imprisoned in German concentration camps, was acting General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party. When we pointed out this matter to Comrade Zachariades later, he did not give me a clear answer, and leaned more to the view that mistakes had not been made. I persisted in the opinion of our Party, and in the end, I told Comrade Zachariades that Siantos was a provocateur, an agent of the British. Had Siantos been in our country,» I told Comrade Zachariades, «our Party would have put him on trial, and sentenced him to the punishment he deserved, while you did not act that way. Of course, that is your business, but this is our opinion on this matter.

«As a conclusion, Comrade Nicos Zachariades agreed that 'Siantos should not have acted as he did,' that 'the comrades had criticized him for this, however, they did not put him on trial, but only expelled him from the party,' he said in the end.

«Pursuing this matter, I would like to point out that we have had a series of political, ideological and military talks with leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party, and this is understandable, because we were two communist parties and had the one strategic aim — the liberation of our countries from the nazi-fascist occupiers and the reactionary bourgeoisie of each country.

«We saw that, despite the outstanding bravery of the Greek partisans and their commanders, after Comrade Nicos Zachariades was released from the Hitlerite concentration camps, he occupied a leading position in 'liberated' Greece with the British army stationed there on the basis of the agreements signed earlier at Caserta and Cairo by representatives of the EAM, agreements which, in the end, led to the Varkiza agreement. Our Party did not agree with these actions of the Greek Communist Party, and considered them as a subordination of the Greek Democratic War, as a failure of its policy of liberation, and capitulation to Anglo-American reaction.

«What is more, at a mass rally in the Athens stadium, at which the chiefs of the Greek bourgeois parties spoke in turn, Comrade Nicos Zachariades spoke, too, as leader of the Greek Communist Party, and declared among other things: 'If the other Greek democratic parties demand the autonomy of «Vorio-Epirus», the

Greek Communist Party will associate itself with them'! Our Party immediately protested publicly and warned that it would combat such views mercilessly. Following this event, we invited Comrade Nicos Zachariades to a meeting, at which I criticized him severely, describing his statement as an anti-Marxist and anti-Albanian stand, and I made it very clear to him that «Vorio-Epirus» which was Albanian territory, would never become Greek territory. I want to say on this occasion that Comrade Nicos Zachariades acknowledged his mistake, admitted to us that he had made a grave error in this direction and promised to correct the mistake he had made.

«We may be wrong, but our opinion is that Marcos Vaphiades, whom they eliminated later, was a good communist and an able commander. Naturally, however, this is only an opinion of ours, which may be right or may be wrong, therefore we do not pretend to judge this, because, in the final analysis, this is a question which is not up to us, but to the Greek Communist Party, to judge.

«Our opposition to the leadership of the Greek Communist Party, with Comrade Zachariades at the head, is based, in the first place, on Varkiza, where the Greek Communist Party and the EAM signed the agreement which is nothing but a capitulation, a surrender of their arms. The Party of Labour of Albania described this act as a betrayal committed against the Greek Communist

Party and the fraternal Greek people. Not only should Varkiza never have come to pass, but it should be sternly condemned. I have expressed this view long ago to Comrades Nicos Zachariades and Mitsos Partsalides who was one of those who signed the agreement. We have respect for these two Greek leading comrades, Zachariades and Partsalides, but this action, inspired and carried out by them, was absolutely wrong and caused the Greek people great harm.

«Nicos Zachariades has defended a thesis which is the opposite of ours on Varkiza. He has always insisted that it was not at all a capitulation, or a betrayal, but 'an act which had to be done in order to gain time and allow them to seize power'.

«In connection with Varkiza, I asked Comrade Nicos Zachariades to explain the reasons for the condemnation and murder of Aris Velouchiotes, who, after the signing of the said agreement, set out to come to Albania in order to make contact with the Central Committee of our Party. Nicos Zachariades replied: 'Although Aris Velouchiotes was a courageous general, he was a rebel, an anarchist, who did not accept the decision of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party on Varkiza, therefore we merely expelled him from the Central Committee of the Party. But what happened to him later, who killed him, etc.,' Zachariades said, 'we do not know. We assure you that we are not the authors of his assassination,' he said.

I have expressed to Comrade Nicos Zachariades our opinion that, without wanting in any way to interfere in their affairs and without knowing Aris personally, only judging from the fact that he was a valiant fighter of the Greek people, he should not have been condemned. 'As for his assassination,' I said, 'we believe what you have told us, but on this score, too, we have some contradictions with you, because we are consistent on the Varkiza question.'

«As Marxist-Leninists, we were very sorry for the Greek people, with whom we had collaborated during the Anti-fascist National Liberation War, therefore, later, at the moments when they were again faced with the question of liberation or slavery, we wanted to continue this collaboration.

«I do not want to speak here about the internationalist support and backing which we gave the Greek Communist Party and the Greek National Liberation War, despite the very difficult conditions with which our country, just liberated from the occupiers, had to cope. Let the Greek comrades speak about this. Despite our great poverty, when the time came, we did everything we could to provide food and shelter to help the Greek refugees who had entered our territory. The fact that Albania was a friendly liberated country, where the people and the Party of Labour of Albania had come to power, a thing which enabled the Greek Democratic Army to feel secure and

defended on its north-western flank, was of great assistance to the Greek Democratic Army.

«After the capitulation at Varkiza, the Greek National Liberation War was resumed. The Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party held its plenary meeting to which delegates from our Party were invited, and we sent Comrade Mehmet Shehu there. On this occasion, changes were made in the leadership, however all these were internal questions of the Greek Communist Party. We simply rejoiced over and encouraged the fierce attacks launched all over Greece against the monarcho-fascists, who, seeing the danger of the situation created, went over from reliance on the British to reliance on the Americans. The United States of America sent the notorious general Van Fleet, whom they considered a consummate strategist, to command its army in Greece.

«We have had contradictions with Zachariades, Bardzotas, and Ioannides over the character of the war that the Greek Democratic Army should have waged against the numerous regular forces of Greek reaction, armed with most modern means of warfare by the American imperialists. Thus, there has been a contradiction over principles between our two parties on this question, too. On the basis of our National Liberation War, we think that the Greek Democratic War should not have been transformed into a frontal war, but should have retained the character of a partisan war, fought

with small and large units. In this way, Van Fleet's superior forces would not have been able to liquidate the Greek Democratic Army, but, on the contrary, this army would have harassed and attacked these forces from all quarters with the tactics of partisan warfare, inflicted losses and gradually weakened them, until it had prepared the counter-offensive. We supported the thesis that the Greek partisan war should have been based on the people, while the weapons should have been captured from the enemy.

«Zachariades' views on strategy were in opposition to ours. The comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party not only described the regrouping of the national liberation partisan forces, which they managed to carry out, as a 'regular' and 'modern' army in form, but they also claimed that they had equipped it with the strategy and tactics of the frontal war of a regular army. In our opinion, the forces which they regrouped were, in fact, just a partisan army, which they did not succeed in equipping either with the partisan tactics, or with the tactics of a regular army. On the other hand, in their military operations the Greek comrades followed the tactics of passive defence which is the mother of defeat. This, in our opinion, was a grave mistake of the leading comrades of the Greek Communist Party, who have proceeded from the incorrect principle that partisan warfare has no final objective, that is,

does not lead to the seizure of power. From the talks we have had with them, we have formed the opinion that the Greek comrades conceive partisan war as a war of isolated guerilla units of 10-15 men, which, according to them, have no prospect of growth and development into brigades, divisions, armycorps, etc. This is not correct. As the experience of every such war has shown, and as our National Liberation War confirmed, provided it is well led, partisan warfare with small units grows gradually as the war develops, as the revolutionary drive of the masses gathers impetus, and thus reaches the stage of the general armed uprising and the creation of a regular people's army. But the comrades of the leadership of the Greek Communist Party stubbornly defended their views and categorically excluded the necessity for the expansion and strengthening of partisan war in Greece. We have not accepted and do not accept these views of theirs. Allow me to express our opinion about how the situation presented itself at the time when the Greek Communist Party went underground and had to begin the war anew: At that time, the ELAS[1] detachments had surrendered their arms, their bases had been destroyed, they lacked clothing, food, weapons; the morale of the ELAS fighters had declined, the movement was in retreat. From the outset, the Greek Com-

1 The Greek National Liberation Army.

munist Party described precisely these regrouped forces as a 'regular' and 'modern' army which, according to them, could fight with the strategy and tactics of a modern army and withstand open frontal war with an enemy ten times its strength. We think that this partisan army should have fought according to the partisan tactics, as our teachers — Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, teach us. How can this regrouping of partisan forces which the Greek Communist Party carried out, be called a regular army when it did not have the necessary cadres, tanks, aircraft, artillery, means of communication, clothing, food, or even the most necessary light weapons?! We think that these views of the Greek comrades are wrong.

«While calling this regrouping of partisan forces a regular army equipped, according to them, with 'the fighting strategy and tactics of a regular army' (strategy and tactics which were never applied in reality), the leadership of the Greek Communist Party also did not think seriously, in a Marxist manner, about how this army would be supplied. The Greek comrades said: 'There is no possibility of capturing our weapons from the enemy'. But such views, in our opinion, are contrary to the teachings of Lenin, who said that in no instance should you wait for aid from abroad, or from on high, but you must secure everything for yourselves; that in no instance should the organization or re-organization of detachments be

neglected on the pretext of lack of weapons, etc. The comrades of the Greek leadership, underrating the enemy, thought that the seizure of power was an easy thing and could be done without protracted and bloody battles, and without sound, all--round organization. These views of the Greek comrades brought other bitter consequences which caused their ultimate defeat, but the astonishing thing is that, even in the recent talks we have had with them, they consider their views correct.

«However, in our opinion based on facts, the tactics and strategy for the war which Comrade Nicos upholds are wrong. In the conversation I had with Comrade Zachariades, he claimed that the units of the Greek Democratic Army could not penetrate deep into Greek territory, because the monarcho-fascists and Van Fleet had burned the villages and had deported the population, so that, according to him, all the inhabited centres were deserted. I told him that such a thing could occur, but not to the proportions Zachariades claimed. This was my opinion based on the logic of facts, because obviously, the monarcho-fascists and the American army could not possibly clear the population from all the inhabited areas of Greece.

«Likewise we disagreed with the claims and views expressed in a letter of the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party addressed to the Political Bureau of our Party, in which the Greek

leaders, wanting to avoid going deeply into their mistakes and wanting to hide them, claim that their defeats stem from their not being supplied with weapons, ammunition and clothing in the necessary quantities and that the enemy had domination in the air and on the sea and was amply supplied by the Anglo-Americans. The truth is that the enemy was much better supplied and had superior strength in men and materiel. However, in such a case, when you are conducting a war against internal reaction and foreign military intervention, the best course is that the enemy should become the greatest source of supplies. The Greek Democratic Army ought to have captured its weapons from the enemy, but these weapons could not be captured by following the tactic of defensive warfare, of passive defence. Nevertheless, we think that the basic question is not one of supplies. We think that, in rejecting the tactics of partisan warfare and its development to the general armed uprising and the seizure of power, the leadership of the Greek Communist Party has applied a defensive and passive tactic which is unacceptable either in a partisan war or in a frontal war with regular armies. By pursuing such a tactic, the Greek Democratic Army, apart from other things, deprived itself of the possibility of extending to other areas of the country where it would certainly have found an inexhaustible source of supply of manpower in the sons and

daughters of the people, and likewise deprived itself of the possibility of capturing its weapons from the enemy through ceaseless, rapid, well--thought actions, carried out where the enemy least expected them. Marxism-Leninism teaches us that there must be no playing at armed insurrection, and the history of so many wars has confirmed that the defensive spells death for any armed uprising. If it remains on the defensive, the uprising is very quickly crushed by a more powerful and better equipped enemy.

«In our opinion, the very tactic the Greek comrades employed confirms this. The biggest active forces of the Greek Democratic Army were kept permanently within the fortified sectors of Vitsi and Gramos. These forces were trained for defensive trench warfare, and a frontal war with the enemy army was imposed on them at the wish of their leadership and they accepted it. The Greek comrades thought they would take power by means of defensive and passive war. In our opinion, power could not be taken by defending yourselves at Gramos. The only manoeuvre the Greek Communist Party made (and this was imposed on it by the circumstances) was that in the battle at Gramos in 1948, where the truly heroic Greek partisans resisted for seventy days on end, inflicted losses in men on the enemy, but in the end, in order to escape encirclement and annihilation, broke out from Gramos and went over to

Vitsi. However, this was still far from the seizure of power. The Greek Democratic Army should have carried out attacks to capture cities. This was not achieved. At that time, too, the Greek comrades claimed that they lacked the forces. This may be true, but why did they lack forces and where should they have found them? The Greek comrades did not analyse this problem deeply and did not solve it, either at that time, or later, in the proper Marxist-Leninist way. The tactics of the Greek comrades, as they put it in the letter of their Political Bureau addressed to our Political Bureau, was to hold Vitsi and Gramos at any cost, as their base for the further development of the war, and they made success in war dependent exclusively on supplies, but without ever finding the correct way to secure those supplies by fighting.

«Thus, suffering defeat after defeat, the Greek Democratic Army was forced to retreat and entrenched itself again in the zones of Vitsi and Gramos. This was a very critical phase, both for the Greek Democratic Army and for our country. During this period we followed the activities of the Greek comrades with great attention. Before the final offensive of the monarcho-fascists against the Greek Democratic Army, the comrades of the Greek leadership were of the opinion that their political and military situation was absolutely excellent, whereas that of the enemy,

according to them, was utterly desperate. According to them, 'Vitsi is extremely well fortified and impregnable to the enemy; if the enemy attacks Vitsi, it has signed its death warrant. Vitsi will become the grave-yard of the monarcho-fascists. The enemy has to launch this offensive because it has no other way out, it is on the brink of disaster. Let the monarcho-fascist army and the army of Van Fleet attack whenever they like, we shall smash them'.

«Comrade Vlantas held that the enemy would direct the main blow against Gramos and not against Vitsi, because 'Gramos is less fortified, as it is situated on the border with Albania, and the enemy, after defeating us there, will turn back to attack us at Vitsi, because it thinks it can annihilate us there, since it borders on Yugoslavia. After fighting at Gramos and inflicting great losses on the enemy, we shall manoeuvre with our forces from Gramos in order to attack the enemy forces at Vitsi from the rear'.

«But a little before the final attack, we informed the Greek comrades that the enemy would launch their attack on the 10th of August on Vitsi and not on Gramos. This information enabled the Greek comrades to avoid being caught by surprise, and to take measures in time. However, even after this, they still believed that the main blow would be directed against Gramos. According to them, the enemy attack on Vitsi, and

not on Gramos, 'changes nothing for us. We have taken all measures both at Vitsi and at Gramos. Vitsi is impregnable,' they thought, 'it is extremely well fortified. All the roads through which the enemy might attempt to pass have been made impassable. The enemy cannot bring his heavy weapons into the Vitsi zone, victory is ours.'

«These were the views of the Greek comrades two days before the enemy attack on Vitsi. Within one day the monarcho-fascists captured the third line of defence at Vitsi and Vitsi was reduced in a matter of two or three days. There was very little fighting and resistance. This came as a great surprise to us. However, we had taken all measures for defence against an eventual attack on our territory by the monarcho-fascists. The Greek comrades, and Comrade Partsalides, who is present here, were not really convinced about the need for the defensive measures we had taken, and called them hasty on our part. The Greek comrades were not realistic. Many refugees, among them democratic soldiers, who were routed, were forced to cross our border. What could we do?! We accepted them and accommodated them in allocated places.

«The analysis which the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party made of the defeat at Vitsi did not satisfy us. We think that a thorough analysis was required, because grave mistakes were made there. After the retreat from Vitsi,

Comrade Zachariades based the prospect of victory on Gramos. 'Gramos,' he said, 'is more favourable to us than Vitsi. The tanks, which were the decisive factor in the victory of the monarcho-fascists at Vitsi, cannot manoeuvre at Gramos,' etc.

«It must be said that at that time Tito's betrayal had become known. Later Zachariades claimed, 'The only ones who gave the Greek refugees asylum were the Albanians, the Yugoslavs not only did not permit the refugees to cross into their territory, but even opened fire on them from behind.' Possibly this may have been so, we cannot say anything about it.

«In a talk with Comrade Zachariades about the retreat from Vitsi, I again raised the question of their mistakes and the inability of the Greek Communist Party, and in particular, of the commander of Vitsi, general Vlantas, to form an objective picture of the situation. 'His ideas,' I said to Nicos, 'have been proved wrong. The fact that the Greek Democratic Army was unable to defend Vitsi, proved this.'

«Nicos Zachariades contradicted me, saying that Vitsi fell because of the mistake of a commander, who had not placed the battalion allocated at one part of the front and failed to appear himself at his position in the fighting. Thus, according to Nicos, this commander was the cause of the defeat at Vitsi, therefore, he told me, 'We

took measures and condemned him.' This was a very simplistic explanation on the part of Comrade Nicos for such a major defeat.

«I told him frankly and in a comradely way that I could not believe such a thing.

'Believe me or not, that's how it is,' Nicos said.

«Nevertheless, I continued: 'What is to be done now?'

«Nicos answered: 'We'll fight.'

'But where will you fight?'

'At Gramos, which is an impregnable fortress.'

«I asked the question: 'Do you intend to place the whole Greek Democratic Army there?'

'Yes,' replied Nicos Zachariades, 'we shall send it all back to Gramos.'

«I said, 'You know your own business and it is you who decide, but our opinion is that Gramos can resist no longer, therefore all those brave fighters of the Greek Democratic Army of whom you are the leader, should not be sacrificed in vain. You must handle your own affairs as seems best to you, however, as we are your comrades and friends, we would like you to summon Comrade Bardzotas, the commander of the Greek troops at Gramos, and discuss this matter with him.' Nicos opposed this idea of mine and told me that this was impossible.

«We know what happened later. Gramos be-

came the final defeat of the Greek Democratic Army.

«The forces at Gramos were routed in four days. In our opinion, the war was not organized there. A completely passive defence was maintained. We do not exclude that fierce fighting may have occurred at some places such as Polje and Kamenik, where some soldiers of the Greek Democratic Army resisted with heroism. With the exception of the Kamenik forces the whole retreat from Gramos was disorderly, like that from Vitsi. Among the officers and men of the Greek Democratic Army there was murmuring about the wrong defensive tactics employed at Gramos. Comrade Zachariades has confirmed this to us.

«We think that at the battles of Gramos and Vitsi the comrades of the Greek leadership did not keep in mind the Marxist-Leninist principles of people's war. The monarcho-fascist columns reached their predetermined positions with great speed and unmolested. They swept through the mountain crags and encircled the democratic forces, who stayed in their trenches and did not counter-attack; the enemy attacked, drove the partisans out of the trenches and occupied the fortifications. The command of the Greek Democratic Army had dispersed its forces in fortified positions and failed to use its reserves to counter-attack and smash the enemy offensive by means of continual attacks and rapid manoeuvring. We

think that their erroneous views on the tactic of the war brought about their defeat. The men were capable of what was required of them, they were old partisans, tested in battle, with high morale, who fought heroically.

«On the other hand, by applying its tactics of passive defence the leadership of the Greek Communist Party allowed the monarcho-fascist army to regroup and reorganize, failed to attack in order to hinder the preparations of the enemy and bring about the failure, or at least, the weakening of its offensive, so as to allow the active forces of the Greek Democratic Army to manoeuvre on a large scale and strike incessantly at the enemy forces everywhere. These are some of the reasons which, in our opinion, caused the recent defeats at Gramos and Vitsi. In its analysis of the defeat at Vitsi, the Political Bureau of the Greek Communist Party says, 'the leadership has grave responsibility', but it says nothing about where this responsibility lies and, moreover, goes on to shed this responsibility in all directions. We think that this is not a Marxist-Leninist analysis.

«To achieve success in their war, the Greek comrades should not have followed the tactic of passive defence, but should have thoroughly applied the Marxist-Leninist principles on the armed uprising. The tactic that should have been followed, we believe, had to have the aim of damaging the enemy forces incessantly and in many direc-

tions, of making the situation insecure for the enemy at all times, obliging them to disperse their forces, striking panic and terror amongst them, and making it impossible for them to control the situation. Thus, the revolutionary war of the Greek people would have grown continuously, would have alarmed the enemy at first and then would have made it lose control of the situation, would have liberated whole regions and zones and subsequently gone over to the next objective, i.e., the general uprising and the liberation of the whole country. In this way, the partisan war in Greece had the prospect of development.

«In the talks we have had with them, we have frequently told the Greek comrades in a comradely manner that the Greek Partisan Army must try to capture its armaments from the enemy in battle; must fight with the weapons of the enemy and secure its food and clothing from the people, together with whom and for whom it must fight.

«We have told our Greek comrades that, first of all, the Partisan Army must be linked with the people from whom it has become separated and without whom it cannot exist. The people must be taught to fight together with the army and to assist it and love it as their own liberator. This is an essential condition. The people must be taught that they must not surrender to the enemy, and the ranks of the army should be strengthened

with men and women, the sons and daughters of the people, by Greece itself.

«Likewise, we have told the Greek comrades in a comradely manner that the leading role of the party in the Greek Partisan Army must be ensured more firmly; the political commissar of the company, battalion, brigade and division should be the true representative of the party, and as such should have the right to command, just the same as the commander. But we have noticed and have often pointed out to the Greek comrades that they have not taken a correct view of the leading role of the party in the army. On this problem I have expressed the opinion of our Party to Comrade Stalin previously and we deal with this again in the letter we have sent him. Failure to understand the leading role of the party in the army, we think, was one of the main reasons which led to the defeat of the Greek Democratic Army in the war. We always proceed from the Marxist-Leninist teaching that the commander and the political commissar form an entity which directs the military actions and the political education of the units, that they are equally responsible for the situation of their detachment from every viewpoint, that both of them, the commander and the commissar, lead their unit, their detachment in the fighting.

«Without the political commissar we would not have had the Red Army, Lenin teaches us.

We followed these principles in our National Liberation Army and follow them now in our People's Army. In the Greek National Liberation Army, ELAS, the joint command of the commander and the commissar existed, but this was not properly implemented in practice. The pressure of erroneous bourgeois views of career officiers, who could not tolerate trusted people of the party in command alongside them, brought about that, at that time, the role of the commissar in command in the Greek Democratic Army was overshadowed and relegated to second place. This is a consequence of the views of the leaders of the Greek Communist Party on the 'regular army'. The comrades of the Greek leadership try to justify the elimination of the role of the political commissar by taking the army of some other country as an example, but we think that the Greek comrades are not realistic on this question.

«Such mistakes were noticed even after the Greek National Liberation Army resumed the war. Since the dismissal of General Marcos this army had not had a Commander-in-chief. We think that such a situation was not correct. With us, the General Secretary of the Party has been and is simultaneously Commander-in-chief of the Army. We think this is correct. In time of peace perhaps it may not be so, possibly the Minister of Defence might fill this position, but in the conditions of the Greek Democratic Army, when it was

still at war, there should have been a Commander-in-chief of the army, and we thought and still think, on the basis of our experience, that this political and military function belongs to the General Secretary of the Party. We have frequently expressed this view of ours to the Greek comrades. The reasons which the Greek comrades have given us to show why they did not act in that way, are unconvincing. The Greek comrades have told us, 'Comrade Zachariades is very modest', or 'we had bitter experience with Tito who was general secretary, prime minister and supreme commander of the army simultaneously.' It seems to us that this is not a question of modesty; this has no connection, either, with what they say about Tito, behind which, it seems to us that something else is insinuated.

«We were astonished at a number of secret forms which the Greek comrades used, but we saw that the reality was quite different. We cannot explain these except with our impression that among the Greek comrades there was confusion, opportunism, false modesty and hiding of the leading role of the party. Perhaps, the General Secretary of the Party need not be Commander-in-chief of the army, but that an army at war should not have a Commander-in-chief, as was the case of the Greek Democratic Army after the dismissal of Marcos, has always seemed wrong to us.

«The Greek comrades make no one responsible for this situation and for the subsequent defeats. They divide the responsibility, attributing it to both the guilty and the innocent. They put the blame on all the party members of the Greek Communist Party who have fought and are fighting heroically. We think that the comrades of the Greek leadership are afraid to make a thorough analysis of these mistakes, which we consider grave ones, are afraid to put the finger on the sore spot. We also think that among some Greek comrades of the leadership there is lack of criticism and self-criticism, and that they protect one another in a 'comradely way' over the mistakes they have made.

«The comrades of the Greek leadership have been opposed to our opinions, which we have expressed to them in a comradely manner as internationalist communists who are fighting for the same cause, who have great common interests, and who were profoundly sympathetic to the cause of the Greek people's war. They have not welcomed our criticisms.

«Comrade Nicos Zachariades has raised many unpleasant things against us, which, of course, we have rejected. His declaration over 'Vorio-Epirus', which I mentioned in the beginning, is already known. Apart from other things, he quarrelled with us, accusing us of allegedly having requisitioned the Greek trucks which were used

to transport the Greek refugees and their belongings and demanded that we mobilized our trucks, too, for their needs. It is quite true that we used the Greek trucks to take the Greek refugees to the places allocated to them. We accepted the Greek refugees and sent them to Northern Albania, where, regardless of our own difficulties, we had to supply food for them, that is, to share the bread from our own mouths with them. As to our means of transport, our park of trucks was very small and we needed them to send supplies to all parts of Albania.

«The Greek comrades also criticize us for not giving priority to the unloading of the material aid, such as clothing, food, tents, blankets, etc., which came to our ports for the Greek refugees before they left Albania. This is not true. The aid which came on ships from abroad for the Greek refugees was sometimes stowed under the cargo that came for us. In such cases obviously we had to unload the goods on top first and then those below. It could not be done otherwise; we do not know of any method of unloading a ship beginning from the bottom.

«However, these were minor disagreements which could be overcome, as they were. The decisive questions were those relating to the political and military line of the Greek Communist Party during the years of the war, about which I spoke earlier.

«Not only have the Greek comrades not accepted our views and criticisms, but we have the impression that they have taken them amiss, and indeed, in their letter to our Political Bureau some time ago, they make an impermissible and anti-Marxist comparison between our principled views and stands and the views of the Titoites. In their distortion of the views expressed by Comrade Mehmet Shehu about the battle of Vitsi and Gramos, in order to adapt them to their own incorrect reasoning, the Greek leading comrades, in our opinion, have the aim of hiding the mistakes made on their part. We understand the grave moments the leadership of the Greek Communist Party has gone through following the defeat at Vitsi and Gramos, and the sense of frustration and anger which exists among them, but such grave and unfounded charges are unacceptable to us, and they should have been considered and weighed up well before they were made, especially by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Greece.

«Following these accusations, which our Political Bureau considered dispassionately, we thought that the departure of the few Greek democratic refugees who were still in Albania had become even more necessary.

«Whether we are right or wrong in these stands and views we have maintained, let Comrade

Stalin tell us. We are ready to acknowledge any possible mistake and to make self-criticism.»

Comrade Stalin interrupted me saying:

«You must not reject a comrade when he is down.»

«You are right, Comrade Stalin,» I replied, «but I assure you that we have never rejected the Greek comrades. The questions which we raised for discussion had great importance both for the Greek army and for us. The Central Committee of our Party could not permit the Greek Communist Party to have the centre of its activities in Albania, nor could it permit their troops to be organized and trained in our country in order to resume the war in Greece. I have said this, in a comradely way, to Comrade Nicos Zachariades, who had previously asked that the Greek refugees should go to other countries, which in fact is what has happened with the majority of the refugees. The reference was to a limited number of them who were still in our country. We have never raised the question of expelling the Greek refugees from our country. However, apart from the request made by Comrade Nicos himself, that the refugees go to other countries, logic forced us to the conclusion that, in the existing situation, even those who had remained absolutely must leave Albania.

«These were some of the problems which I wanted to raise, and which we have raised both

with the Greek comrades and in the letter addressed to you earlier, Comrade Stalin.»

«Have you finished?» Comrade Stalin asked.

«I have finished,» I said.

Then he called on Comrade Zachariades to speak.

He began to defend Varkiza, stressing that the agreement signed there was not a mistake and expounded on this theme. He had expressed these same views to me previously.

In order to explain the reason for the defeat, amongst other things, Zachariades raised the question: «If we had known in 1946 that Tito was going to betray, we would not have started the war against the Greek monarcho-fascists.» Then he added some other «reasons» in order to explain the defeat, repeating that they lacked armaments, that though the Albanians had shared their own bread with the refugees, nevertheless they had raised obstacles, and so on. Zachariades raised some second-rate problems as questions of principle. Then he mentioned our request (which he himself had raised earlier) that those Greek democratic refugees who still remained should also leave Albania. According to him, this put an end to the Greek National Liberation War.

On this occasion, I want to express my impression that Comrade Nicos Zachariades was very intelligent and cultured, but, in my opinion, not sufficiently a Marxist. Despite the defeat they

had suffered, he began to speak in defence of the strategy and tactics followed by the Greek Democratic Army, insisting that this strategy and tactics had been correct, that they could not have acted otherwise. He dwelt at length on this question. Thus, each of us stuck to his own position.

This is what Nicos Zachariades said. He spoke at least as long as I did, if not longer.

Comrade Stalin and the other Soviet leading comrades listened to him attentively, too.

After Nicos, Comrade Stalin asked Mitsos Partsalides:

«Have you any opinion to express on what Comrade Enver Hoxha and Comrade Nicos Zachariades have said?»

«I have nothing apart from what Comrade Nicos put forward,» said Partsalides, adding that they were awaiting the judgement of the Soviet comrades and the Bolshevik Party on these questions.

Then Stalin began to speak in the familiar calm way, just as we have known him whenever we have met him. He spoke in simple, direct, and extremely clear terms. He said that the Greek people had waged a heroic war, during which they had displayed their courage, but that there had also been mistakes.

«As regards Varkiza, the Albanians are right,» Stalin pointed out, and after analysing this

problem, added: «You Greek comrades must understand that Varkiza was a major mistake. You should not have signed it and should not have laid down your arms, because it has inflicted great harm on the Greek people's war.

«As regards the assessment of the strategy and tactics you followed in the Greek Democratic War, although it was a heroic war, again I think that the Albanian comrades are right. You ought to have waged a partisan war, and then, from the phase of this war should have gone over to frontal war.

«I criticized Comrade Enver Hoxha, telling him that he must not reject a comrade when he is down, however, from what we heard here, it turns out that the Albanian comrades have maintained a correct stand towards your views and actions. The circumstances which had been created and the conditions of Albania were such that you could not stay in that country, because in this way the independence of the People's Republic of Albania might have been placed in jeopardy.

«We complied with your request that all the Greek democratic refugees go to other countries and now all of them have been removed. Everything else, including the weapons, ammunition, etc., which the Albanian comrades took from those Greek democratic soldiers who crossed the border and entered Albania, belonged to Albania,» Stalin

emphasized. «Therefore, those weapons must remain in Albania,» he said, «because, by accepting the Greek democratic soldiers, even though it disarmed them, still that country endangered its own independence.

«As regards your opinion, according to which, 'If we had known in 1946 that Tito was going to betray, we would not have started the war against the monarcho-fascists,' this is wrong,» Stalin pointed out, «because you must fight for the freedom of the people, even when you are encircled. However, it must be recognized that you were not in a situation of encirclement, because on your northern flank you had Albania and Bulgaria; all supported your just war. This is what we think,» concluded Comrade Stalin and added:

«What do you Albanian comrades, Hoxha and Shehu, think?»

«We accept all your views,» we replied.

«And you Greek comrades, Zachariades and Partsalides, what do you say?»

Comrade Nicos said:

«You have helped us greatly. Now we understand that we have not acted correctly and will try to correct our mistakes,» and so on.

«Very good,» Stalin said. «Then, this matter is considered closed.»

When we all were about to leave, Molotov intervened saying to Nicos Zachariades:

«I have something to say to you, Comrade Nicos. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has received a letter from a comrade of yours, in which he writes that 'Nicos Zachariades is an agent of the British'. It is not up to us to solve this question, but we cannot keep it a secret without informing you about its content, especially when accusations against a leading comrade of the Greek Communist Party are made in it. Here is the letter. What can you say about this?»

«I can explain this matter,» replied Nicos Zachariades, and said: «When the Soviet troops released us from the concentration camp, I reported to the Soviet command with a request to be sent to Athens as soon as possible, because my place was there. Those were decisive moments and I had to be in Greece. At that time, however, your command had no means to transport me. So I was obliged to go to the British command where I asked them to send me to my homeland. The British put me on an aircraft, and that is how I returned to Greece. This comrade considers my return home with the help of the British command as though I have become an agent of the British, which is untrue.»

Stalin intervened and said:

«That's clear. This question is settled, too. The meeting is over!»

Stalin got up, shook hands with all of us in

turn and we started to leave. The room was a long one and when we reached the exit door, Stalin called to us:

«Wait a moment, comrades! Embrace each other, Comrade Hoxha and Comrade Zachariades!»

We embraced.

When we were outside, Mitsos Partsalides remarked:

«There is no one like Stalin, he behaved like a father to us. Now everything is clear.»

Thus, the confrontation in the presence of Stalin was over.

FIFTH MEETING

April 1951

On the political, economic and social situation in Albania. External reaction aims to overthrow our people's state power. The verdict of the Court at the Hague. «The enemy's attempts are uncovered and defeated through a high vigilance and a resolute stand». «Along with the construction of industrial projects you must strengthen the working class and train cadres». On the collectivization of agriculture. «You need the Soviet specialists not to sit in offices, but help you in the field». Comrade Stalin severely criticizes a Soviet opera which paints the reality in rosy colours. At the 19th Congress of the CPSU (B) — for the last time with the unforgettable Stalin.

The last meeting I had with Comrade Stalin took place in Moscow, in the evening of April 2, 1951, at 10.30 Moscow time. Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Bulganin also took part in this meeting.

During the talk various problems were touched on about the internal situation in our Party and state, about the economic problems, especially in the sector of agriculture, about the economic agreements which could be concluded with various states, the strengthening of the work in our higher institutions, the problems of the international situation, etc.

First, I gave Comrade Stalin a general outline of the political situation in our country, the great work the Party had done and was doing for the inculcation of a lofty revolutionary spirit in the masses, the sound unity which had been created and was growing stronger day by day in the Party and among our people, and the great and unshakeable confidence the people had in the Party. I told Comrade Stalin, «We shall ceaselessly consolidate these achievements while always remaining vigilant and ready to defend the independence and freedom, the territorial integrity of our country and the victories of the people against any external or internal enemy who might attempt to threaten us. In particular, » I told Comrade Stalin, «we follow with vigilance the ceaseless attempts of American imperialism, which through its lackeys, the nationalists of Belgrade, the monarcho-fascists of Athens and the neo-fascists of Rome, aims to overthrow our people's state power and to enslave and partition Albania.»

I also informed Comrade Stalin of the verdict of the Court at the Hague.

«As I have told you earlier,» I said among other things, «this court investigated the so-called Corfu Channel incident, and manipulated as it was by the Anglo-American imperialists, in the end unjustly condemned us and ordered us to pay the British an indemnity. We did not accept this arbitrary decision, but the British seized our gold which the German nazis had plundered from the former National Bank of Albania. When the gold plundered from the occupied countries and carried away to Germany by the nazis was discovered, at its Brussels meetings in 1948, the Tripartite Commission charged with its distribution allotted Albania a part of what belonged to it. Now the British have seized a part of our gold, have frozen it and do not allow us to withdraw it according to the decision taken in Brussels.

«Close links among the external enemies of our country are now being established quite openly,» I told Comrade Stalin. «Their provocations against us from the Yugoslav border, as well as from the Greek and Italian borders, by land, sea and air, have been continuous. Apart from the openly anti-Albanian policy pursued by the present rulers of these three countries, fascist traitors, Albanian emigrants, bandits, defectors and criminals of every description are being assembled there, too, and being trained by the foreign-

ers to be smuggled in Albania for the purpose of organizing armed movements, of sabotaging the economy, making attempts on the lives of the leaders of the Party and state, setting up espionage centres for themselves and their bosses, etc.

«We have always been vigilant towards these attempts by external reaction and have always given all their attempts the reply they deserved. Our army and the State Security forces have made their major contribution in this direction. They have been ceaselessly strengthened, well educated and are gradually being modernized. while mastering the Marxist-Leninist military art.»

Continuing my outline, I told Comrade Stalin about a number of military problems and the main directions from which we thought an external attack might come.

«How do you know that you might be attacked from these directions?» Comrade Stalin was quick to ask me.

I gave him a detailed answer on this problem and, having heard me out, he said:

«Regarding the military problems you raised, we have assigned Comrade Bulganin to discuss matters in detail with you.»

Then he asked a series of other questions such as: With what weapons do you defend your borders? What have you done with the weapons you captured? How many people can you mo-

bilize in case of war? What sort of army have you, today? etc.

I answered these questions of Comrade Stalin's in turn. Among other things, I spoke about the powerful links of our army with the people, saying to Comrade Stalin that the people wholeheartedly loved their army, and in case of an attack by foreigners, the whole of our people were ready to rise to defend the freedom and independence of the country, the people's state power.

After listening to my answers on these problems, Comrade Stalin began to speak, expressing his joy over the strengthening of our army and its links with the people, and among other things he advised:

«I think that you have a sufficiently large standing army, therefore I would advise you not to increase it any more, because it is costly to maintain. However, you should increase the number of tanks and aircraft a little.

«In the present situation, you should guard against any danger from Yugoslavia. The Titoites have their agents in your country, indeed they will smuggle in others. They want to attack you, but cannot, because they fear the consequences. You should not be afraid, but must set to work to strengthen the economy, to train the cadres, to strengthen the Party, and to train the army, and must always be vigilant. With a strong Party, economy and army, you need fear nobody.

«The Greek monarcho-fascists,» he said among other things, «are afraid that the Bulgarians may attack them. The Yugoslavs, too, in order to secure aid from the Americans, clamour that allegedly Bulgaria will attack them. But Bulgaria has no such aims either towards the Greeks or towards the Yugoslavs.»

In the course of the talk I told Comrade Stalin of the great work being done in our country to strengthen the unity among the people and between the people and the Party, and of the blows we had dealt at the traitor and enemy elements within the country. I told him that we had shown no vacillation or opportunism in dealing with such elements, but had taken the necessary measures to avert any consequences of their hostile activity. «Those who have filled the cup with their criminal and hostile activity,» I told Comrade Stalin, «have been handed over to our courts where they have received the punishment they deserved.»

«You have done well,» Stalin said. «The enemy,» he continued, «will even try to worm his way into the Party, indeed into its Central Committee, but his attempts are uncovered and defeated through high vigilance and a resolute stand.»

On this occasion, too, we had an extensive discussion with Comrade Stalin about our economic situation, about the achievements and pro-

spects of the economic and cultural development of our country. Amongst other things I told Comrade Stalin of the successes of the policy of the Party in the socialist industrialization of the country and the development of agriculture and of some of our forecasts for the First Five-year Plan, 1951-1955.

As always, Comrade Stalin showed keen interest in our economic situation and the policy of the Party in this direction. He asked a series of questions about when the textile combine, the sugar plant, and other industrial projects that were being built in our country, would be finished.

I answered Comrade Stalin's questions and pointed out that along with the successes achieved in the construction of these and other industrial and social projects, as well as in agriculture, we also had a series of failures. We had analyzed the causes of the failures in the Central Committee of the Party in a spirit of criticism and self-criticism, and defined who was responsible for each of them. «In particular, we are attaching importance to strengthening the leading role of the Party, the continuous bolshevization of its life, the closest possible links with the masses of the people,» I told Comrade Stalin, and went on to a summary of the internal situation in our Party.

«Why do you tell us of these problems which, you, Comrade Enver, know better than we do?»

Comrade Stalin broke in, and continued: «We are happy to hear that you are building a series of industrial projects in your country. But I want to stress that along with the construction of industrial projects you must give great importance to the strengthening of the working class and the training of cadres. The Party should take particular care of the working class, which will increase and grow stronger day by day, parallel with the development of industry in Albania.»

«The question of the development and progress of agriculture has particular importance for us,» I told Comrade Stalin, continuing my discourse. «You know that ours is an agricultural country which has inherited great backwardness from the past. Our aim has always been to increase the agricultural products and, bearing in mind that the greatest part of our agriculture consists of small private holdings, we have had and still have to take many steps in order to encourage and help the peasant to work better and produce more. Results have been achieved, production has increased, but we are aware that the present level of the development of agriculture does not respond as it should to the increased needs of the country for food products for the population, raw materials for industry or for expanding export resources. We know that the only way to finally pull our agriculture out of its backwardness and put it on a sound basis for large-

J. V. Stalin (1879-1953).

Comrades Enver Hoxha and Hysni Kapo laying a wreath on behalf of the CC of the PLA at the monument of Joseph Stalin in Tirana. March 6, 1953.

Comrade Enver Hoxha signing the Oath of the Albanian People on the occasion of the death of Joseph Stalin. March 10, 1953.

The monument to Joseph Stalin in the square in front of the «Stalin» Textile Combine in Tirana (by sculptor O. Paskali).

scale production is that of collectivization. But in this direction we have been and are cautious.»

«Have you many cooperatives now in Albania?» Comrade Stalin asked.

«About 90,» I replied.

«What is their situation? How do the peasants live in these cooperatives?» he asked next.

«Most of these cooperatives,» I told Comrade Stalin in reply to his question, «are not more than one or two years old. Nevertheless, some of them are already displaying their superiority over small fragmented individual holdings. The organized joint work, the continuous state aid for these cooperatives with seeds, machinery, cadres, etc., has enabled them to put production on a sounder basis and to increase it. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to ensure that the agricultural cooperatives become an example and model for the individual peasant. Therefore, our main aim in the organization of agriculture is that, along with the strengthening of the existing cooperatives, greater aid and care for them, cautious steps should be taken also for the setting up of new cooperatives.»

Stalin listened to me and advised:

«You should not rush things in setting up other agricultural cooperatives. Try to strengthen the cooperatives you have, but you must see to it that the yields of crops in these cooperatives are high,» he said. «In this way,» he went on, «the

members will be satisfied with the good results of the production in the cooperative, and the other peasants will see this and will want to become collectivized, too.

«As long as the peasants are not convinced of the superiority of the collective property you have no way to increase the number of cooperatives. If the existing cooperatives prove beneficial to the peasants, then the other peasants will also follow you, too.»

The talk with Comrade Stalin on the problems of our agriculture, on the state of our peasantry, on its traditions and mentality took up most of the time of this meeting. Comrade Stalin was eager to get as much information as possible, he was interested right down to the last detail, rejoiced over the successes but did not fail to make comradely criticism of us and give us valuable advice about how we should improve our work in the future.

«Is maize still the main crop in Albania?» Comrade Stalin asked.

«Yes,» I answered, «maize and then wheat. However, in recent years, cotton, sunflower, vegetables, sugar-beet, etc., are being grown more and more.»

«Do you plant much cotton? What yield do you get?»

«We are continuously increasing the area

planted to this industrial crop and our farmers have now gained no small experience. This year we plan to plant nearly 20,000 hectares,» I told him, «but as to the yield of cotton and its quality we are still backward. Up till now we have reached an average of about 5 quintals of cotton per hectare. We must improve this situation. Many times we have discussed and analyzed this problem which is of great importance to us, because it is connected with the clothing of the people. We have taken and are taking many measures, but, as yet, we have not achieved the required results. Cotton needs sunshine and water. We have the sunshine,» I told Comrade Stalin, «and our soil and climate are suitable for the cultivation of this crop, but we are still backward as to irrigation. We must set up a good irrigation system so that this crop, too, can go ahead.»

«To which do your peasants give more water, the maize or the cotton?» Stalin asked me.

«The maize,» I replied.

«This means that your peasants still do not love cotton and underrate it,» he said.

Continuing the talk, I told Comrade Stalin that recently we had discussed the weaknesses that had manifested themselves and the tasks arising for the further development of cotton-growing. I pointed out that from consultations in the field it turned out that, apart from other things, in some cases seed unsuitable for our conditions

had been used, and I presented some requests for assistance so that work would proceed normally, both in the textile combine and in the cotton-ginning plant.

«I think that some specialist may have made a mistake on this question,» he said. «But the main thing is the work of the farmer. As to your requests regarding cotton, we shall comply with all of them, if they are necessary. However, we shall see.»

Several times in succession during this meeting Comrade Stalin inquired about our agricultural cooperatives, their present situation and their prospects for development. I remember that, among others, he asked me these questions:

«What sort of machinery have your agricultural cooperatives? How are MTS working? Do you have instructors for the cooperatives?» etc.

I answered all his questions, but he was not completely satisfied with the organization of our work in this direction, so he asked me:

«This work is not going as it should. Thus, you run the risk of harming those agricultural cooperatives you have created. Along with the continuous qualification of your cadres, it would be as well for you to have some Soviet advisers for your agricultural cooperatives. You need them not to sit in offices, but to help you in the field.

«If the main directors of your agriculture have not seen how agricultural cooperatives are

run and organized elsewhere,» continued Comrade Stalin, «it must be difficult for them to guide this work properly, therefore let them come and see it here, in the Soviet Union, to learn from our experience and take it back to the Albanian farmers.»

In what I said, I also told Comrade Stalin about the need to establish economic relations with other countries. After hearing me out, Comrade Stalin addressed these words to me:

«Who has hindered you from establishing relations with others? You have concluded treaties with the people's democracies, which have accorded you credits. Please, try to establish agreements like that you have with Bulgaria, with the others, too. We are not opposed to this, on the contrary, we consider it a very good thing.»

In the course of the talk I also raised with Comrade Stalin some problems concerning aid from the Soviet state for the development of our economy and culture. As on all other occasions, Comrade Stalin received our requests with generosity and said that I must talk with Mikoyan over the details and decisions on these requests, and I met him three times during those days.

Comrade Stalin accepted my request for some Soviet university teachers whom we needed for our higher institutions, there and then, but he asked:

«How will these teachers manage without knowing Albanian?»

Then, looking me straight in the eye, Comrade Stalin said:

«We understand your situation correctly, that is why we have helped and will help you even more. But I have a criticism of you, Albanian comrades: I have studied your requests and have noted that you have not made many requests for agriculture. You want more aid for industry, but industry cannot stand on its feet and make progress without agriculture. With this, comrades. I mean that you must devote greater attention to the development of agriculture. We have sent you advisers to help you in your economic problems,» he added. «but it seems to me they are no good.»

«They have assisted us,» I intervened, but Stalin, unconvinced about what I said concerning the Soviet advisers, repeated his opinion. Then, with a smile he asked me:

«What did you do with the seed of the Georgian maize I gave you, did you plant it or did you throw it out of the window?»

I felt I was blushing because he had me in a fix, and I told him that we had distributed it to some zones, but I had not inquired about the results. This was a good lesson to me. When I returned to Tirana, I inquired and the comrades told me that it had given amazingly good results,

that farmers who had sown it had taken in 70 or even 80 quintals per hectare, and everywhere there was talk of the Georgian maize which our peasants call «Stalin's gift».

«What about eucalypts? Have you sown the seeds I gave you?»

«We have sent them to the Myzeqe zone where there are more swamps,» I said, «and have given our specialists all your instructions.»

«Good,» said Comrade Stalin. «They must take care that they sprout and grow. It is a tree that grows very fast and has a great effect on moisture.»

«The seed of maize I gave you can be increased rapidly and you can spread it all over Albania,» Comrade Stalin said and asked:

«Have you special institutions for seed selection?»

«Yes,» I said, «we have set up a sector for seeds attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and shall strengthen and extend it in the future.»

«You will do well!» Comrade Stalin said. «The people of that sector must have a thorough knowledge of what kinds of plants and seeds are most suitable for the various zones of the country and must see to getting them. From us, too, you should ask for and get seeds which produce two or three times the yield. I have told you before that we shall help you with all our possibilities, but the main thing is your own work, comrades,

the great and ceaseless work for the all-round development of your country, industry, agriculture, culture and defence.»

«We shall certainly carry out your instructions, Comrade Stalin!» I said and expressed my heartfelt thanks for the warm and friendly reception, and the valuable advice and instructions he gave us.

This time I stayed in the Soviet Union for the whole of the April.

Some days after this meeting, on April 6, I went to the « Bolshoi Theatre» to see the new opera «From the Depths of Heart» which, as I was told before the performance, dealt with the new life in the collective farm village. That same evening Comrade Stalin, too, had come to see this opera. He sat in the box of the first floor closest to the stage, whereas I, together with two of our comrades and two Soviet comrades who accompanied us, was in the box in the second floor, on the opposite side.

The next day I was told that Stalin had made a very severe criticism of this opera, which had already been extolled by some critics as a musical work of value.

I was told that Comrade Stalin had criticized the opera, because it did not reflect the life in the collectivized village correctly and objectively.

Comrade Stalin had said that in this work life in the collective farm had been idealized, truthfulness has suffered, the struggle of the masses against various shortcomings and difficulties was not reflected, and everything was covered with a false lustre and the dangerous idea that «everything is going smoothly and well».

Later this opera was criticized in the central party organ also and I understood Stalin's deep concern over such phenomena which bore in themselves the seeds of great danger in the future.

From the unforgettable visits of these days, what I did at Stalingrad remains firmly fixed in my mind. There, amongst other things, I went to the Mamayev Kurgan Hill. The fighters of the Red Army, with the name of Stalin on their lips, defended the hill not inch by inch but millimetre by millimetre, in the years of the anti-Hitlerite war. The soil of Mamayev Kurgan was literally ploughed, and its configuration was changed many times over by the terrible bombardment. From the hill covered with flowers and grass it was before the famous battle of Stalingrad, it turned into a place covered with iron and steel, with the remains of tanks which had crashed into one another. I stopped and respectfully took a handful of earth from this hill, which is the symbol of Stalin's soldier, and later, when I returned to Albania, I donated it to the Museum of the National Liberation War in Tirana.

From Mamayev Kurgan, the city of Stalingrad, with the broad Volga River winding its way through it, was spread before my eyes. In this legendary city, on the basis of Stalin's plan for the attack on the Hitlerite hordes, the Soviet soldiers wrote glorious pages of history. They triumphed over the nazi aggressors, and this marked the beginning of the change of direction of the entire development of World War II. This city, which bears the name of the great Stalin, was devastated, razed to the ground, turned into a heap of ruins, but did not surrender.

Quite another picture was spread before me now. The city ravaged by the war had been rebuilt from its foundations with amazing speed. The new multi-storied blocks of flats, social-cultural institutions, schools, universities, cinemas, hospitals, modern factories and plants, the beautiful new broad avenues had entirely changed the appearance of the city. The streets were lined with green-leafed trees, the parks and gardens were filled with flowers and children. I also visited the tractor plant of this city and met many workers. «...We love the Albanian people very much and now in peace time we are working for them, too,» a worker of this plant told me. «We shall send the Albanian peasants even more tractors, this is what Stalin wants and has ordered.»

Everywhere we were aware of the love and respect the great Stalin, the dear and unforget-

table friend of the Albanian people and the Party of Labour of Albania, had inculcated in the ordinary Soviet people.

Thus ended this visit to the Soviet Union, during which I had my last direct meeting with the great Stalin, of whom, as I have said at other times, I retain indelible memories and impressions which will remain with me all my life.

In October 1952, I went to Moscow again at the head of the delegation of the Party of Labour of Albania to take part in the 19th Congress of the CPSU(B). There I saw the unforgettable Stalin for the last time, there, for the last time I heard his voice, so warm and inspiring. There, after showing that the bourgeoisie had openly spurned the banner of democratic freedoms, sovereignty and independence, from the tribune of the Congress, he addressed the communist and democratic parties which still had not taken power, in the historic words: **«I think it is you that must raise this banner, ...and carry it forward if you want to rally around yourselves the majority of the population, ...if you want to be the patriots of your country, if you want to become the leading force of the nation. There is nobody else who can raise it.»**

I shall always retain fresh and vivid in my mind and heart how he looked at that moment

when from the tribune of the Congress he enthused our hearts when he called the communist parties of the socialist countries «shock brigades of the world revolutionary movement».

From those days we pledged that the Party of Labour of Albania would hold high the title of «shock brigade» and that it would guard the teachings and instructions of Stalin as the apple of its eye, as an historic behest, and would carry them all out consistently. We repeated this solemn pledge in the days of the great grief, when the immortal Stalin was taken from us, and we are proud that our Party, as the Stalin's shock brigade, has never gone back on its word, has never been and never will be guided by anything other than the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and the disciple and consistent continuer of their work, our beloved friend, the glorious leader, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.

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